

Shorty and Patrick

PZ

3

.W5955
Sh

FT MEADE
GenColl

USS
Oklahoma



Stephen French Whitman



Class

PZ3

Book

W5955Sh

Copyright N^o

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

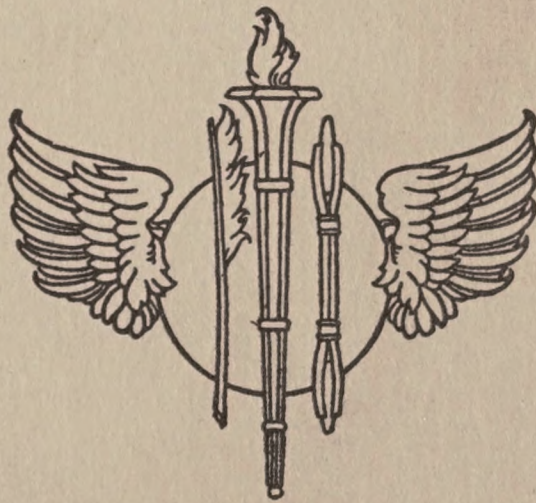


“‘There’s a little fella,’ says I to myself, ‘an *ichi-ban* mascot.’”

SHORTY & PATRICK

U. S. S. O K L A H O M A

By STEPHEN FRENCH
WHITMAN • • *Author of*
PREDESTINED, and Other Stories

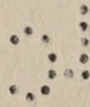
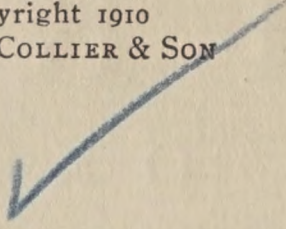


Illustrations by F. C. YOHN

Publishers, P. F. COLLIER & SON, New York

P23
W59555h

Copyright 1910
By P. F. COLLIER & SON



© CL A278438

CONTENTS

I

SAILORMEN	7
-----------------	---

II

"PAPEEYON"	40
------------------	----

III

THE ICHI-BAN MASCOT	67
---------------------------	----

IV

PICTURE-GALLERY GEORGE	91
------------------------------	----

V

THE BIG ONE	118
-------------------	-----

VI

THE MYSTERIOUS HOURS	144
----------------------------	-----

List of Illustrations

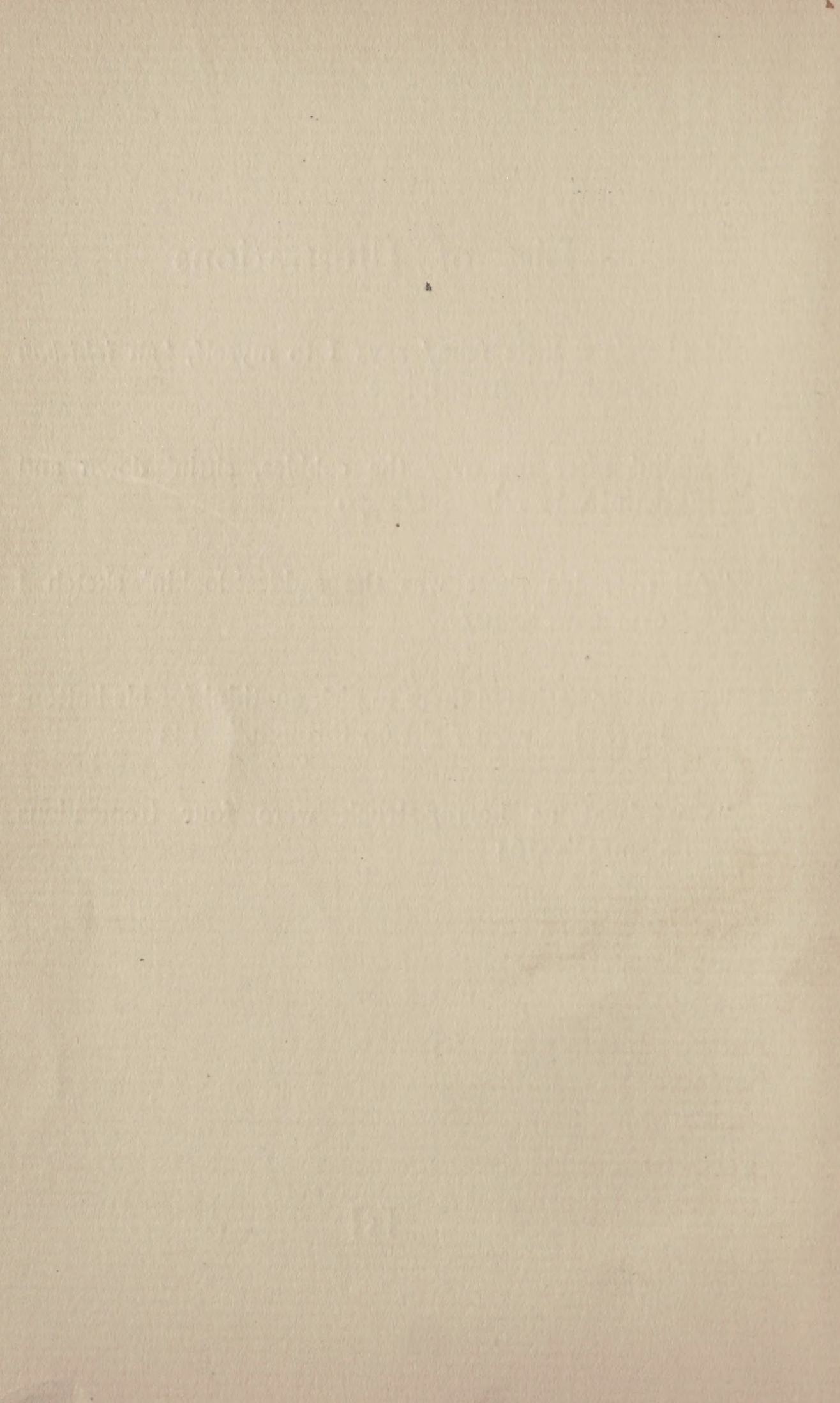
“ ‘There’s a little fella,’ says I to myself, ‘an *ichi-ban* mascot.’ ”—Frontispiece.

“Slidin’ after me over the cobbles, sittin’ down and actin’ very reluctant.”—79

“All over his chest was the saddest-lookin’ sketch I ever saw.”—107

“He never hesitated there to pick anythin’ for his button-hole. He went right on through.”—143

“Gapin’ at us horror-struck were four tremendous dames.”—164



SHORTY & PATRICK

I

SAILORMEN

COUNTLESS fugitives from the city's heat bore me, as a tide bears a chip, into that garish wonderland. Beneath arc-lights, we drifted past booths of fortune-tellers, screened cages of "wild men from Borneo," platforms of pseudo-Oriental dancing girls. In our ears sounded the cries of showmen, the whine of carousel pipe-organs, discords from jangling piano strings, shrill choruses drifting out of music-halls, the peanut oven's incessant whistle. Together those noises made the music we had come to hear: they were the song of Coney Island.

SHORTY AND PATRICK

A salient racket attracted us: we saw the father of all carousels revolving. Round its rim charged a cavalcade of varnished monsters; these, proud young men and shrieking maidens rode, to the snorts and squeals of "rag-time" blown from metal organ pipes by steam. Through this shindy penetrated, from time to time, a song, *crescendo* and *diminuendo*, as a gilded chariot, drawn seemingly by two apocalyptic beasts, whirled into sight on one side and, in a flash, out of sight on the other.

In this chariot sat two sailormen in blue,—a big man and a little one. Their arms were entwined; their heads were together and their flat, round hats knocked slantwise; their legs were cocked up on the gilded dashboard. One was singing; and in that commonplace playground I heard:

"The Water Clock's in gay Paree; the City
Wall's in Rome;

The Jap, he's packed the Summer Palace up
an' shipped it home;

The Russian, an' the Prussian, an' the British
grenadier,—

It's plain that they've got theirs: but what do
I get, Captain dear?

SAILORMEN

“For—

You ain’t to loot, the Captain says,
You ain’t to loot, the Captain says,
You ain’t to loot, the Captain sa—a—a—ys;
It’s nowhere ladylike.”

The varnished monsters glided finally to a standstill. The music machine, blowing *fortissimo* through all its pipes, stopped with a last explosion. The big man and the little one issued down upon firm ground. They found me directly in their way.

“Good evening. Did you ever see a water clock in Peking?”

The big man—seaman gunner, by the white bursting shell embroidered on his sleeve—regarded me gravely and without surprise.

“Faith,” he replied, suddenly, “I never did, to reco’nize it. Ask Shorty here. He made the poethry. If that was what you heard.”

The little man stepped round from behind his friend. With an expression of anxiety almost too intense, he asked:

“Fond of it, sir?”

“By all means. But about the water clock in Peking. Or was it Tien-tsin, or T’ung Chou? At any rate, you didn’t get the chance to loot

SHORTY AND PATRICK

Canton. And that's where *the* water clock stands, isn't it?"

Shorty inspected me with interest.

"Take the money," he said. "That's the fact. In Canton it was, when we were lyin' off Shameen Island in that rotten little monitor the *Appalachicola*. I remember now; for I gave an argument to the Chink who played nurse to that water clock about which was right, the clock or the ship's bells. You've seen it? Up two flights o' stairs on a platform, recollect? Say, I took those stairs without touchin'."

Prospective patrons of the varnished steeds, surging round us, threw us into one another's arms. I seized them both, as one seizes instinctively two endangered treasures.

"I saw a big, comfortable, wet-looking place back there," I hinted.

Shorty besought me, earnestly:

"Say nothin' more."

We squeezed through a stifling press: of young men exuding rank tobacco smoke, of harassed mothers with their back hair tumbling down and infants slung across their shoulders, of young girls giggling beneath big hats, of children lost underfoot among the peanut shells. Finally we arrived in a large music-hall. On

SAILORMEN

a stage, at the far end of the place, a half-moon of persons in outrageous costume sang and danced languidly. We sat down at a table.

The seaman gunner lighted a leathery cigar. Shorty produced a book of cigarette papers and a muslin pouch of flake tobacco. Smoking, they inspected the half-moon performers: I, with the satisfaction and the pride of a discoverer, inspected them.

They were lean, well-made, healthy-looking young men, their wide collars rolled back from their brown necks, their trousers trimly laced about their slender hips. They wore their round hats jauntily: "U. S. S. Oklahoma" was printed in gilt letters on the hat ribbon of each. The big one's sandy, Celtic features were almost melancholy despite the screeching chorus. The little one, however, by his twinkling eye, appreciated the raw horror of the half-moon and rejoiced in it maliciously.

"Where did you get your Frenchman and Jap and British grenadier?" I asked him.

"Tien-Tsin," he answered, without hesitation. "Up from Taku comes yours truly, after the bombardment, in a jiggin', bristlin' box-car—where there were tracks left—an' slam into bunches o' trouble. Fifteen thousand Chinks

SHORTY AND PATRICK

sittin' round the Foreign Settlement in a ring, usin' magazine rifles on us. But when we butted into the city at len'th, an' had everythin' our own way, all you could hear was those abandoned soldiers wishin' their clothes were all pockets. Take my oath, sittin' alongside the Tien-tsin road, one afternoon, this is what I see, paradin' past, in five minutes. First, a German infantryman wearin' two fur jackets out of a pawn-shop an' carryin' his helmet full o' bric-a-brac. Second, a British lieutenant herdin' half a dozen Sikh lancers loaded down with carved ivory junk. Third, a Russian jinglin' most indecent with jade jewelry an' trailin' a fathom o' pink embroidery, like. An' four, a guy from Illinoise wheelin' a T. P. G. wheelbarrow. 'What you got in the wheelbarrow?' I asked him. He picks out a fistful an' slings it at me. Say, were you ever hit over the head with a fistful o' Mexican dollars?' "

"Chop it!" interrupted the seaman-gunner severely. "Facts is what's wanted here,—naked, undecorathed facts."

"You weren't there, that's why."

"What's a T. P. G. wheelbarrow?" I asked.

"Tien-tsin Provisional Government. My respects, sir, an' here's wishin' you all that's

SAILORMEN

proper. Then I get up, bein' rested, an' gather in my Mexicans, an' go into camp by the Ninth Infantry, where the ships' batches hung out. An', gettin' through the mule lines, a large, solemn mule ups an' kicks me one in the small o' the back—so to speak—an' breaks a big jade tablet stowed away there, that I wouldn't 'a' lost for anythin'. 'Oho!' says an infantry captain, comin' up an' watchin' the small pieces trickle out around my shoes. 'Oho!' says he, 'the mule is a moral animal.' "

"But wait a minute. How did you come to be in Tien-tsin? That was a marines' job, wasn't it?"

"Sure," cried the seaman-gunner, indignantly. "An' barrin' that, how anyway? In Nineteen-one you were thransferred aboard the *Oklahoma* off the *Appalachicola*. An' where was the *Appalachicola* when Taku was taken? An', by the same token, where were you? Sittin' in your undershirt on a three-inch freeboard off the peaceful city o' Canton, my fascinated an' well-beloved hearer."

Shorty winked at his companion, glanced at me, and grinned sheepishly.

"It's a good story though. You've been stealing local color from some one. You've literary

SHORTY AND PATRICK

talents about you. I believe you did make that song."

"*That* he made," remarked the seaman-gunner. "You see, every man to his *forte*, like. I can sling eight hundred an' fifty pounds o' steel through a canvas patch at a couple o' miles anny mornin', an' Shorty here can make 'rug' rhyme wid 'bug' entirely. It's very well indeed to have a poet aboard, at that. Like when that paymasther—he's gone now—started to reform the chow, the grub, you know, comin' home from the East. An' Shorty wrote a poem about it, an' plastered it on the gundeck scuttlebutt—"

"It was entitled," from Shorty, taking heart, "it was entitled 'The Belly-robber.' Is that you, waiter? How dast you come cringin' round here after that pitiful glass o' lather you had the face to serve me? Don't press me, Sir. . . . Well, then . . ."

"Four years ago you changed ships," I suggested. "Then you just caught the *Oklahoma* back from the East. But how—"

"Did I get my transfer? Canton River did for me, an' that sweetscented health resort they named it after. I was flat on my back—to my last gasp, you might as well say—when the Ol'

SAILORMEN

Man on the *Appalachicola* tells the Doc, 'The battleship *Oklahoma's* homeward bound before long; we'll take a chance,—at least, we'll let him die in a man's size sick-bay.' An' he sends to the Admiral for my transfer. So, subsequently, I went aboard the *Oklahoma* feet last, while she was takin' on Hongkong coal. Wouldn't any one be daffy with joy at gettin' loose from a sea-goin' Turkish bath afloat on a meanderin' sewer? I was, with what stren'th I had, till I saw what I'd got for company. This is one of 'em. Tell him about your conversation with the Kaiser, Patrick." Shorty, behind his hand, here twisted his face, for my benefit, in the most ghastly manner, and finished with a look of cynical anticipation.

Patrick frowned at his cigar-end.

"It's nothin' to tell. We were at Kiel, that year, for the races, an' the Kaiser boarded us. An' us, consequently, froze neatly in line just for'd o' the marines, an' the band wailin' out the German national anthem most luxurious. An' presently, out o' the tail o' my eye, I see him comin' along the deck, wid Ould Particular—meanin' the Skipper—an' the Admiral, an' the First Luff, an' sundry Dutchmen covered wid medals an' buttons an' aiguillettes. A good-

SHORTY AND PATRICK

lookin' man was the Kaiser, wid a long nose, a thremendous mustache, a brown face, an' one hand behind his back. An' he looks everyone in the eye, as much as to say, 'An' who the jump-in' blazes do you think *you* are?' An' he comes to me, you see, an' he looks me in the eye, an' I look him in the eye, an' he stops up! An' Ould Particular says—it was in the days, remember, when a turret crew was the whole thing in gun-firin'—'There's the gun-pointer,' says Ould Particular, 'by all rights, who holds the great-guns record just now.' An' the Kaiser, he says as plain as you or me, peerin' up very fierce, 'You're a good sailorman,' says he, in just those words."

"Ha, ha! An' what did you say, Patrick?"

"Faith, it took me all of a sudden! An' the rest standin' tight an' keepin' in their wind till you could 'a' heard your hair growin'. An', bein' caught so, I says—what I could 'a' been thinkin' of I don't know—'The same to you, your Riverince,' I says, 'an' manny of them.' "

Shorty, doubling over, emitted gurgles of delight.

"Wow! Yowie! May I hope to die!"

"I was never laid tongue to for it," retorted Patrick, calmly, "Which is more than you could

SAILORMEN

say, you little shrimp, afther you fetched the Homeward Bound in Yokohama. Tell him that one, if you have the gall."

The other, ostensibly for the purpose of cleaning out his pipe, rapped noisily with the briarwood bowl upon the table. At the waiter's instantaneous appearance, Shorty seemed almost extravagantly surprised.

"Properly told," he warned me, after certain ceremonies, "it's a long one. It begins off Yokohama Bund, an' it ends up by the Brooklyn cobdock. But it's a straight one, this time."

He gazed upward reminiscently. A smile glimmered on his face.

"Look what a change o' climate did for me, now! I remember hearin' the surgeon on the *Appalachicola* talkin' to the Ol' Man, by the for'd turret, outside the sick-bay ports, where I was lyin'. The ports were open, to let in a lukewarm, muddy, fishy, little Canton breeze.

"'What chance has he?' says the Ol' Man.

"'Give him a month more hereabouts,' says the surgeon, quite cheerful, 'an' I will lay my pay to yours, sir, that he has not enough insides left to make one respectable set o' gitter strings.'

"That was me, Shorty, seaman o' the jolly monitor *Appalachicola*. An' yet, a month after

SHORTY AND PATRICK

my transfer, the *Oklahoma* sticks her nose out o' the Yallow Sea, an' we get a clean breeze. That very day—"

"That very day," interrupted Patrick, "I was afther holdin' converse wid a friend, for'd on the berth deck, beside the marines' rifle racks, by the sick-bay dure. An', whilst I was so, out o' the sick-bay dure an' in amongst the racks rolls this Shorty here, an' Pills—the apothecary's assistant—over an' over, mixed up wid belts an' bayonets an' rolls of absorbent cotton, an' Lord knows what. 'Twas the mercy o' Hiven that no one saw it. 'Save us,' says I, takin' a look. 'Isn't that the near-dead man we had aboard at Hongkong?' "

"The trouble was," from Shorty, grown impatient, "The trouble was, in comes this Pills, an' stops alongside my berth, where I was reclinin', gettin' my mouth prepared for a basin o' soup an' a ration o' guava jelly.

" 'Where's my chow?' says I. 'Where's the apprentice with my chow, you greazy little dab o' zinc ointment?' says I, for I couldn't stand for that Pills in any shape or form.

" 'Very well spoken, for a dyin' man,' says he, with a grin like a small hyena. 'You've been gettin' on remarkable since you were trans-

SAILORMEN

ferred to this sanitarium,' he says. 'The surgeon's hardly seen your equal,' he says. 'An' he's tired pawin' you over day in an' out, my faintin' convalescent. An' what in consequence? Shall I break it to you? The aft great-guns for yours. Third Division. Henceforth, three-one-o-five's *your* watch-number: so on your way.'

" 'What,' says I, settin' up in spite o' my delicate condition. 'I'm expected to turn out an' work alongside a gun division,—an invalid? I'm to be deprived o' my sleep an' guava jelly? You low-lived body-snatcher!'

"With that, Pills, he jerked the mattress an' the beddin' clean from under me. Without thinkin' o' regulations or anythin', the rest, that Patrick saw, followed immediately."

Shorty paused, was about to clear his pipe as before, saw my expression of anticipation, and modestly gouged out the dottle with a match. He continued:

"Before settin' out towards home, we swung off Yokohama Bund for a week's stay. It was there that the men chipped in to buy the Homeward Bound.

"You've seen a Homeward Bound pennant on a home-goin' ship? Sometimes they'll run two

SHORTY AND PATRICK

hundred feet long, trailin' from the maintruck. They may be buntin', or they may be silk: that depends on the sporty disposition o' the crew. Our Homeward Bound was silk.

"Collins, a gunner's mate in our division, went on the beach an' left the order in a silk shop halfway down the Benten Dori. But, come along time to collect the goods, Collins, bein' distracted, maybe, at findin' two hundred an' ninety dollars in his clothes, falls down an ammunition hoist o' the aft turret an' breaks a leg. With that, so far as steady-goin' reputations went, it was up to Patrick here to bring the pennant out. But Patrick had just been ashore, an' it was common scandal—"

"Get on wid the story," snapped Patrick, suddenly waking, "an' omit that exthrananeous flummery!"

"Oho! O *Hananoski!* O *mae ni horete iro-o-o!*"

"Translate?" I requested.

Shorty glanced at Patrick.

"As I was sayin'," he resumed hurriedly, "it was up to Patrick, but he couldn't go. The gun-deck talked it over after dinner. Says one:

"'Let the mail orderly get permission to fetch it when he goes to the post office.'"

SAILORMEN

“‘That stuff Finney,’ says a bunch together. ‘Not much! There ain’t any marines in this as yet, an’ won’t be.’

“Then Patrick says:

“‘Let Shorty fetch it. It’s his liberty tomorrow, an’ he knows these heathen beyond the chance o’ gettin’ held up. He’s a convalescent, too; his works are delicate an’ he won’t dast to cut loose an’ get pickled. What’s more, he can stand lookin’ at a lot o’ money without gettin’ dizzy, or I’m no judge o’ youman nature.’

“‘It ain’t right,’ I told ’em, blushin’.

“‘Blushin’!’” cried Patrick, in ingenuous amazement.

“‘Blushin’ ’s what I said. ‘It ain’t right,’ I told ’em. ‘I’ve only just joined. One o’ you had better go.’

“‘But no: ’twas me for that job, an’ no argument.

“‘So, next day, I got my face shaved an’ my hair oiled, an’ stowed away the two hundred an’ ninety; an’, about four bells, I hit the Bund,—just Shorty, pleni-potentiary extraord’nary.”

Said Patrick, suspiciously:

“‘You were got up some, I’m thinkin’, just for to go an’ buy a pennant.’”

“‘I *was* got up,” admitted Shorty, without

SHORTY AND PATRICK

hesitation. "I was a suitable escort for that two hundred an' ninety. On the Bund, I hopped into a rik'sha. 'Benten Dori,' says I. An' off we go, past the hotels, with the American ladies smilin' on the verandas, an' the little Jap girls clatterin' out of the way, hi—hi!

"There's somethin' in the air o' that town! Smell it an' you've got to grin. We cut through the Concession, an' rattled across a bridge, in amongst coolies an' rik'shas an' bald-headed babies an' paper parasols. I was all the money. I begun to get ideas. But, 'No, Shorty,' I says. 'The Homeward Bound is what you're after, at this writin'.' An' just then a guy in a salt an' pepper suit jumps out into the street, flap-pin' his hands at me.

"'Save us!' he yells, 'That can't be you!'"

"Say," interrupted Patrick. "Who was that fella? That's what I've been thryin' to get out o' Shorty ever since, sir. Was he a professional home-wrecker, or just an amateur?"

"He was a friend o' mine," replied Shorty, severely. "A friend I hadn't seen since goin' aboard the station ship *Hancock*."

"'No,' I says to him. 'I'm on business, to begin with. Come up the Benten Dori with me first, an' after that I'm all yours.'"

SAILORMEN

“‘You’ve got to side-step for a minute,’ says he, very overbearin’ly. ‘Then, we ’ll go an’ transact your business together, you an’ I.’

“I should ’a’ known better. I forgot that I was a convalescent. How sharper than a serpent’s tooth, as the sayin’ goes. An’ me off it for three months! There were all manner of extenuatin’ circumstances. . . .

“Well, I ain’t lingerin’ over the details. There’s an interim that I can’t find any explanation for.”

“Yes,” observed Patrick, “that interim. Observe this evidence, then. I collected it myself, though it’s far from explainin’ the whole of it.

“It was about three bells, mornin’ watch. Passin’ along, top-side, amongst the holystones, I looked overboard, by chance, to spit. An’ there, in the dawn’s early light, rubbin’ our paint, on the bosom o’ the wather lies a small sampan, two Japs workin’ the oars, an’ a sailorman stretched out in the bottom, oblivious entirely.

“The deck officer comes an’ leans over.

“‘What’s this?’ says he.

“At that moment, I reco’nized it was Shorty.

“‘I don’t just know, sir,’ I says, in consequence.

SHORTY AND PATRICK

“‘Call a masther-at-arms,’ says the deck officer.

“So I goes, very hot under the collar, an’ routs out a Jimmy Legs, an’ leads him up to where the deck officer was rubberin’ down at the sampan, an’ this disreputable Shorty. I an’ the Jimmy Legs got down the ladder an’ brought him up; an’ a pritty sketch he was. On my word, between thinkin’ o’ the Homeward Bound, an’ the two hundred an’ ninety he’d taken ashore, an’ my glowin’ recommendation of him as a moral young man, I came near to bad language.

“‘Hold up a bit,’ says the deck officer. ‘What’s all this rubbish on him? Go through him here, till we see what he’s got.’

“I an’ the Jimmy Legs went through him. Now, sir, I present this evidence, which resulted:

“First, he had a black eye, widout searchin’.

“Second, he had the best part of a tea-house dure lantern crumpled up in his overshirt pocket.

“Three, some one had been an’ tattooed a pink dragon an’ a risin’ sun in the middle of his chest.

“Four, he had on him thirty-four dollars in *yens* an’ copper *cash*.

SAILORMEN

"Five, *the Homeward Bound* was wrapped forty-one times around his waist!"

"Sure," said Shorty, his voice containing an undertone of pride. "How about that? How came the Homeward Bound, *an'*, mind you, all those *yens* additional? *An'* that pink dragon, *an'* the risin' sun, tattooed? Oh, it's all regular. Here,—look for yourself. Ever see a better done one?"

"But it's all past me. I came flickerin' back to life on the gun-deck linoleum, outside the door o' the brig, *an'* a marine sentry watchin' over me. Then along stole Patrick, here, *an'* tipped a wink to the sentry, *an'* sat down near me. Says he, behind his hand:

"'Are you listenin', you little sick, moral man?'"

"'I am,' I answered back. '*An'* this is some turrible mistake, if that soldier's guardin' *me*. All because I had a faintin' spell ashore, comin' out o' the Y. M. C. A.'"

"'Is that so!' says Patrick. 'Now I was thinkin' you'd fainted over the whole o' Yokohama. There's been unofficial representations, through the police, by no end o' merry villagers, already this beautieful day. Three Jap tea-house guys: two with beer *an'* *saké* bills, *an'* one with

SHORTY AND PATRICK

a request to be paid for a dinner o' fifteen covers, followed by *geisha* dances. Not to mention a rik'sha-man with a black eye shockin' similar to yours, demandin' six hours' tariff. An' a householder whose front wall was stove in by one o' those can-wagons backin' into it, late in the evenin', the horses takin' fright at Chinese firecrackers. Make no mistake: Ol' Particular's heard everythin' already. At first, he says "Why, disgraceful beyond all leniency," he says. "Is not this well covered by Article 16, to wit, 'Whosoever, when on shore, plunders, abuses, or maltreats any inhabitant, or injures his property in any way'? To begin with, the *Appalachicola* man bein' in the most suspicious condition on return, an' a straggler to boot, we will say, roughly speakin', 'twas him, an' put him in irons. Mr. Lochinvar"—meanin' the Executive—"pray see to it, to go into effect immediately on his recovery."'

"'Patrick, I should never 'a' changed to this ship,' I says, cryin' a little, bein' so weak an' dispirited. 'I should 'a' croaked up Canton River, among youman bein's, an' been buried with every honor.'

"'Forget it,' says Patrick. 'You'll be out o' this in two shakes. Hark now. When the sur-

SAILORMEN

geon comes by to go to the sick-bay, I'll whistle *Jon Kena*. That's the tip for you to groan like the divil. You're a very sick man, d'you see: an' a day in the brig ud be the death o' you. Remember, you're close to dyin', from a relapse.'

"*That* won't be any deception,' I says.

"So, by an' by, I hear Patrick whistlin' some horrible hash up the deck—"

"Beggars," interrupted Patrick, dryly, "ain't usually choosers,—nor musical conasoors."

"An' so I groaned an' groaned; an' it all turned out as planned. That is, the surgeon came an' had a look, an' went an' stirred up the Executive, who went an' stirred up Ol' Particular. The Executive says to him, as I heard afterwards off that long-eared Jap of Ol' Particular's:

"*'Sir,'* he says, *'the one we took on from the *Appalachicola* has been an' come near killin' himself ashore. The Doc thinks if he lies in the brig we'll be usin' a spare ens'n to wrap him in.'*

"*'Well,'* says Ol' Particular, wigglin' his fingers, *'we can spare it to him. He's gone an' had an internation'lly complicated shore-leave,—or near to it.'*

SHORTY AND PATRICK

“ ‘But now he’s a very sick man,’ says the Executive.

“ ‘Did he bring back the Homeward Bound for the men, as I hear tell? Ha-rumph! Well, well, turn him into the sick-bay for the present. But when he’s fine an’ fit again, I will wear him down to a whisper for all this.’

“So I went into the sick-bay again. ’Twasn’t any fake from me—I *was* sick. I hadn’t the stren’t’h to hand that Pills a kick, when he stood by, grinnin’, an’ picked on me. I couldn’t even take a melancholy pleasure speculatin’ about the time I’d had. So you can imagine.

“I was three days gettin’ out. We were away from Yokohama, then, rollin’ high an’ low.

“But say, I came out to find myself a hero! To hear ’em tell it between decks, I’d done more damage on the beach than a landin’ party with quick-fire guns. What’s more, there was the Homeward Bound, snappin’ an’ curlin’ from the main-truck, for all to make guesses about. When first I came hobblin’ up to the gun-deck barber chairs, where they were waitin’ four deep for a shave, I had all the makin’s in the crowd to borrow a cigarette from.

“When we went to quarters, I saw Ol’ Particular havin’ me well pointed out for his private

SAILORMEN

eye. You should 'a' seen how decrepit an' pitiful I looked at that: it's a wonder he didn't gush tears all over his face at the very bag o' my knees! All mornin', for fear he was goin' to open up on me right away, I just lit'rally shambled round. Then, finally, someone forced a pot o' paint on me, an' ordered me to the aft turret, to clean up spots. Which I proceeds to do, an' discovers Patrick, here, at the same job, whistlin' through his teeth as if glad to be alive.

"Squattin' down on the deck alongside o' Patrick, I begun to slap little gobs o' paint against the turret, very mournful. Between two slaps, I heard a newspaper rustlin' round the corner, further aft. An', creakin' my neck a trifle, exceedin'ly cautious, who should I see, in the midst o' the quarterdeck, settlin' himself in a big wicker chair, with his back to us, an' beginnin' to peruse a stale copy o' the 'Kobe Chronicle,' but Ol' Particular. Yes, sir: on the open quarter-deck in a wicker chair, readin' the news, an' smokin' a Cabbago de General Aguinaldo. Such was his customary stunt on cruise, of a balmy mornin', an' is, indeed, if you'll believe me, to this very day.

"Say, a galley boy would 'a' known better

SHORTY AND PATRICK

than to do what I did then. I think I must 'a' been light-headed still.

"After makin' sure that Patrick was too far round the turret to 'a' seen the Skipper come up, I says, out loud:

" 'All right,' I says, 'say what you want. But if he hasn't been white to me, I hope my insides ain't ever any better.'

" 'Meanin' who?' asks Patrick.

" 'Meanin' Ol' Particular,' I says. Ha! I was clean demented, wasn't I? But I gave him his unofficial title, as brassy as possible, so he should know he was eaves-droppin'.

" 'Look here,' I says. 'I go on the beach; an' to be frank with you, I have a beer or two; an' so, bein' a convalescent, all at once I fade away. An' what does *he* do? As soon as he sees what's what, "Poor young man," says he, as I heard afterwards, "poor young man, he's gone an' suffered a relapse, doin' his duty by the Homeward Bound. Lamb broth for his, with parsley! An' the rest o' the voyage, watch if I don't let him muss round with a light-weight paint-brush, renovatin' the ship.' "

"Patrick, lookin' at me out o' the corner of his eyes, says nothin'. I went on:

" 'I'm glad he came to act that way. It makes

SAILORMEN

me more comfortable about all I've done for him.'

" 'All you've done for him!' shouts Patrick, droppin' his brush.

" 'Sure,' I says. 'Proposin' that we all come up with a silver service, as a mark o' special affection, to be handed to him to music when we get home, an' all that. An' chippin' in the first coin to start it. Ain't that anythin'? I suppose not! Oh, no!'

"Patrick looks at me with his mouth open. Peekin' round the turret, I see Ol' Particular's wicker chair empty, an' the quarter-deck bare.

" 'Say,' says Patrick, at length, 'what's eatin' you, anyway?'

"Then it hit me, all in a bunch, just what I'd done.

" 'Well, I think I'm daffy,' I says. 'Ol' Particular was settin' round the corner, all the while I was talkin'. I think I was tryin', in some way or other, to square myself.'

" 'Square yourself!' yells Patrick, horror-struck. 'How would you go about queerin' yourself? He'll hammer you flat. You should be lyin' down with ice on you.'

" 'Wait up,' I says, weakly gigglin'. 'Suppose he swallows it? Suppose, in thinkin' it

SHORTY AND PATRICK

over, he concludes it's no more than fair he should have a silver service crowded on him?

" 'Why,' says Patrick, 'I ain't a prophet, but I should say, knowin' what I know o' crews' ingratitude, that the poor old cuss ud draw a blank.'

" 'Well, I'm the goat, that's all,' I says. 'I've done for myself, this time.'

" 'Next mornin', I ran slam into Ol' Particular. That is, I was makin' ready to throw a pail o' water over the aft turret-top, an' I looks down, an' there he was, risin' from his wicker armchair, where he'd been settin', on the quarter-deck, readin' a copy o' the Regulations. 'Get ready, Shorty,' says I to myself. 'It's goin' to drop on you now.'

" 'Ol' Particular looks up an' says, very gruff:

" 'You're the *Appalachicola* man,' he says.

" 'Yes, sir,' I says.

" 'Are you recoverin'?' he says. Take my oath, his curiosity made my flesh creep.

" 'Yes, sir,' says I, 'I'm recoverin', thanks.'

" 'Very good,' he says. 'How 's the food on this ship?'

" 'It's fine,' says I.

" 'Do you get good tobacco in the canteen?' he asks me.

SAILORMEN

“‘Yes, sir,’ says I, ‘it’s heavenly.’

“‘Very good,’ says he, again, an’ vanished below. Was I dreamin’?

“I didn’t know. Days went along, with no one raisin’ a finger to me; still I didn’t know. It came to me quite suddenly, one fine afternoon, when I clattered down the gun-deck, an’ saw a mob standin’ round in a ring, gapin’ at Yabey, the Jap wardroom boy. Yabey was passin’ out a tale. Says he, makin’ all allowance for his English:

“‘Then the Skipper, he leaned across the table confidentially to the First Luff. He said there never was a crew did such a thing before. He said he felt proud. A solid silver service, presented as a mark of appreciation, off his men, was a great honor. He’d never forget it.’

“‘What’s that?’ yells Collins, the gunner’s mate with the broken leg, thumpin’ his crutch on the linoleum. ‘A silver service! Off the crew! Do we look the part?’

“‘It’s strange,’ says another, ‘but I heard somethin’ quite similar whilst I was rubbin’ bright-work yesterday by the wardroom shaft. That the crew was comin’ up for Ol’ Particular. I took it for a joke, an’ had a hearty laugh.’

SHORTY AND PATRICK

“ ‘Gee,’ says another, ‘if that don’t remind me! Jimmy Legs, Number One, was sayin’ the same to-day! Whatever it is, it’s trickled down from the wardroom to the chief petty officers’ mess.’

“Say, imagine me! Listenin’ to that, I was just about a foot high. Then, with a loud, coarse laugh, this great, big stuff, here—Patrick—tells the whole thing on me.

“They looked me over carefully, sayin’ never a word. Collins, he stumps round me on his crutch, regardin’ me from all sides, like I was some horrible waxwork. Says one Finney, a marine orderly, who hadn’t any business in it anyhow:

“ ‘It’s slopped all over the ship. There’s not an ens’n, no, nor a oily-nosed black-ganger, aint lookin’ towards us. Ol’ Particular sent off no end o’ letters at Port Said, which I carried, staggerin’, myself. I suppose by this time the glad tidin’s are well on their way to little ol’ New York.’

“ ‘It’ll be all through the Service when we reach home,’ says Collins, lookin’ at me and suckin’ his teeth unpleasantly. ‘The motormen runnin’ up Sands Street, by the Yard, they’ll know it. There’ll be reporters with cameras climbin’ aboard before we’ve got a hawser out.

SAILORMEN

Where's your solid silver souvenirs for your Skipper? Haven't any? My, my, of all the cheap bunches of assorted skates, lead me up to those *Oklahoma* sailormen . . .'

"Well, from that time I'd 'a' taken any wearin' to a frazzle in the power of Ol' Particular, an' enjoyed it. It'd 'a' been a vacation to me.

"Every time a new line o' talk about that silver service came down from the wardroom, some guy felt called on to bring it to my notice. It was brought there in different ways. Once, when I went to have my face shaved, the barber havin' been corrupted, I came out lookin' like an explosion victim. When I turned in one night after a special sweet compliment Ol' Particular paid the crew, my dreamin' sack cut loose an' spilled me out on my head. Come along gun-drill in the aft turret, I got bounced up against everythin' hard an' sharp in reach, what with the general activity; an' I'd 'a' got more yet, only I nearly kicked one joker down a hoist. My ditty-box was full o' coal dust an' a dead rat, one mornin', an' I caught that Finney sneakin' past with coal dust on his hands. So I up by accident and scraped his face along a W. T. door covered with cork

SHORTY AND PATRICK

paint till his own mother'd 'a' been astonished. After that, they begun to treat me different.

"By an' by we passed Gibraltar.

"It's funny how used they'd got, by then, to thinkin' about that solid service. They'd sit round an' ask each other how much would one cost, an' did the Skipper really say this was the best crew an' cruise he'd ever had, an' would there be pictures in the papers o' the ceremonies? They begun to take on airs, an' think 'emselves generous. 'There never was another crew gave a service to the Skipper,—it'd be a unick thing to do, all right.' They didn't find it a bad sensation, after all,—patronizin' the Ol' Man in their minds.

"Finally, when there were ragged edges on the Homeward Bound, it came along the last night out. Sandy Hook Light was past, an' the sky ahead was a faint, watery yallow over where Fourteenth Street was waitin' for us. An' you'll understand how, after longin' for that sight for hundreds o' years, like, up muddy little rivers, an' in mussy little foreign harbors, we piped down that evenin' with our chins on our shoulders, lookin' towards it through the ports. Swingin' doors, an' pianos, an' girls talkin' good, straight New-York, an' the Elevated rippin' an'

SAILORMEN

roarin' by outside! If we'd worn wings, there'd 'a' been few hammocks swung that night.

"Just before taps, Collins calls a meetin' outside the gun-deck washrooms. Every big noise in the crew was there.

" 'Well,' says Collins, 'as I foresaw from the first, the cards are forced on us. The Skipper, he's hurtin' his eyes already, lookin' for it; an' by this time the Navy near an' far is just sittin' round an' waitin'.'

"Says Finney, the mail orderly, 'Well, let 'em. There ain't any ring through *my* nose.'

" 'Look-a-here,' says Patrick, shovin' for'd. 'How much ud each have to give, makin' a flat-feet canvass from deck to deck?'

" 'Three or four dollars, say,' says Old Duffy, the one we called Rip Van Winkle,—he was balancin' on the age limit that year; it was next summer that he splashed over.

" 'Three or four dollars!' says Patrick. 'An' what's three or four dollars, more or less, the mornin' after you get your liberty?'

"They all begun shoutin' an' arguin' at once. In the mix-up that followed, Mr. Finney got his blouse ripped up the back most mysterious. I was standin' as near him as possible, and *I* couldn't see who did it.

SHORTY AND PATRICK

“‘Now, then,’ yells Collins, ‘do we, or do we not, blow the Skipper?’

“‘We do!’ roars everyone, red-headed with bein’ questioned about their sportin’ blood.

“‘Moved an’ carried,’ says Collins. ‘And now, who goes up an’ makes the little bow? You, Duffy?’

“Ol’ Duffy, you should ‘a’ seen him. He goes shrinkin’ into his shoulders like a girl, tryin’ not to grin with satisfaction.

“‘Not me, mates,’ he says. ‘Oh, not me.’

“‘Collins, then,’ says Patrick at once, an’ Collins begun puttin’ on, whilst Duffy craned his neck at Patrick like he’d been robbed of five months’ pay.

“Then everyone had a name to yell. A lieutenant came bristlin’ down the gun-deck; but he went away again very quick,—not to be interferin’, you see, with Ol’ Particular’s business.

“‘We’ll draw lots,’ says Collins at length, when everyone was exhausted. ‘We’ll draw lots, to settle who goes up and makes the little bow.’”

“He tears a handful o’ slips off a pilot-boat newspaper, an’ holds ‘em out. All the noticeable guys present have one from him. In the mix-up, I get one myself.

“‘Back with that!’ shouts Collins.

SAILORMEN

“‘Why?’ I asked.

“‘Why? Nice question, that! Why, you’re the cause o’ the whole thing,’ he says.

“‘An’ if I am?’ says I. ‘Glad enough you are, after all, an’ well you know it. I should be havin’ thanks for mine, instead o’ this chin music. I come aboard your big, fat cow of a ship, an’ I make a name for her. She’ll be in every paper. She’ll be the talk an’ the teeth-gnashin’ envy of every captain in the Service. She couldn’t ‘a’ got such a reputation for less than bein’ blown up in action. An’ when poor Shorty, the blushin’ parent of her renound, reaches out his hooks for a little chunk o’ paper, he gets it put all over his shirt. Shame!’

“Collins, he wilts. He looks at me like I was a curiosity. Still lookin’ at me, he makes two or three tries to speak. At len’th, he says, in a small, little voice:

“‘The man with the O on his slip is the one.’”

Shorty, pausing, watched a smoke ring sail away.

“And who was the one?” I inquired.

For a moment, Shorty struggled inwardly. Then, suddenly, he smote the table a tremendous blow. He bellowed:

“Me!”

II

“PAPEEYON”

HANDS on the luminous dials of street clocks crept round to eleven. The innumerable patrons of the theatres, crowding forth, congested Broadway. Up and down the glittering street broke out confusion: one heard a din of gongs and brakes, dainty hoofs dancing, automobile horns, and the carriage-caller's raucous hoot. The way between the curbs became a torrent bed in which, like a constricted flood, crowded the glistening coats of horses, the gleaming bodies of "limousines," and the yellow sides of cars. Arc lights above shop windows shed a ghastly radiance upon the multitude of slowly moving faces. Under striped awnings before theatres, bareheaded women, elegantly dressed and wearing jewels, were jostled by the ragged gallery gods.

“ P A P E E Y O N ”

In the midst of this familiar, nightly business, suddenly I discovered an incongruous touch: I saw, standing on the curb-stone, watching the current of traffic for a ford, two friends of mine, one tall, one short, both clothed in the blue uniform of the United States Sailor-man.

I approached them from behind. Reaching an arm round each sinewy, brown neck, I gently bumped the two heads together. As my sailor-men wheeled, it was a pleasure for me to see pleasure dawning on their faces.

In the comparative quiet of a side street, tall Patrick immediately put his finger, so to speak, upon the vital point:

“Shorty here has call to be aboard by four bells,—I should say, by chu o’clock. As for myself, I’ve a night’s liberty. Like the guy in the book—what’s his name?—I’ve burned my britches behind me.”

“I didn’t know the *Oklahoma* was up from Tompkinsville,” I said.

“We brought her up yesterday: she’s to be scraped an’ pared an’ manicured an’ gummed up wid unguents an’ face powders till she’s the cryin’ shame o’ the fleet. You should put eye to her now, as she lies lollin’ in Dry Dock 3. But

SHORTY AND PATRICK

wait till she's finished! She'll be far too fancy, I'm thinkin', to be respectable."

Shorty, at this point, interrupted by collapsing weakly into Patrick's arms. In this pose he made feeble motions as of a man about to faint.

"Pay no attention to me," he wheezed; "I'm just a little giddy,—not havin' had anythin', you see, in more than half an hour . . ."

"I was on the point of suggesting"—I protested.

Directly across the street blazed the gay front of a café. There we found, in an alcove, a quiet table, guarded by a cadaverous waiter who stared at my friends with some hostility, till Shorty implored him to take off his false-face and appear under his true colors.

"We've been to a show," said Patrick, gravely, setting down an empty glass. "A show on Broadway."

"A rotten show," interjected Shorty. "Girls an' music. An' there were sailormen in it. For ten cents I'd 'a' gone round to the back door, after, an' kicked the last one o' those fake sailormen up in the floatin' ribs. Sailormen! Huh!"

"They *were* irritatin'," Patrick remarked. "It ain't right to let a lot o' guys like them come out on a stage an' make a monkey of a man's

“ P A P E E Y O N ”

profession. Now, look you, sir, they were supposed, as I take it, to be comin' ashore in some foreign port, you see,—where, I ain't saying. An' how do they come ashore, then? Why, by leaps an' bounds, singin' an' jiggin' about like a lot o' flies in a bottle, kissin' the gurruls, an' handin' 'em flowers, an' gettin' down on one knee, and Lord knows what entirely.”

“But, those, I suppose, were comic opera sailormen?”

“That's no great excuse,” replied Shorty, hotly. “If they can't act right, they shouldn't act at all. For ten cents, as I remarked—”

“But,” I said, “I remember seeing a large number of sailormen ashore one Christmas eve, in a foreign port; and Patrick's remark about flies in a bottle fitted them rather well. I remember seeing some things in Ship Street—”

“What's that!” piped Shorty, sitting straight. “Ship Street? Not Hongkong? Not Ship Street, Hongkong, of a Christmas eve?”

“The same. It was in—yes, Nineteen two, and there lay in the harbor a Russian, a Frenchman, half a dozen Englishmen and—by George! It was the *Oklahoma*, too!”

“He was there, Patrick!” cried Shorty, shrilly.

SHORTY AND PATRICK

"But I'd forgotten it was the *Oklahoma*,—that was long before I knew you. You were there too? You were ashore?"

"Ha! ha!" Slapping Patrick on the shoulder, he lay back and grinned at me. "If that don't get my goat! An' you there! Patrick, d'you remember my friend Papeeyon, of that occasion?"

"He comes to mind," said Patrick, simply.

"It's a little enough world, when once you've been around it,"—from Shorty, smiling in friendly fashion at fresh glasses. "To think—of all nights in the year, an' you there! Perhaps you saw me, at that?"

"I saw a great many—"

"I know. Yeh; you'd 'a' seen me, for I was smeared all over the place, as I recollect,—I an' my friend Papeeyon. Tch! tch! Patrick, if you had the choice, where would you be to-night? Not this side o' the world, I don't think. An' that's the funny part of it: when you're there you would be here, an' when you're here you can't think of anywhere you'd as soon be as there. Sometimes, I'd give an ear just to hear rik'sha wheels buzzin', an' wooden shoes click-in', an' the big gongs up back in the temples goin' 'bo-ong-g-g!' of an evenin' . . ."

“ P A P E E Y O N ”

“But,” I said, after a pause, “this would be Japan, Shorty, and it’s getting us away from that Hongkong evening of ours.”

“Yeh, that’d be Japan. ‘Bo-ong-g!’ go those gongs’ way off in the dark. I used to know a little girl there, in that tea-house up over the Hundred Steps. Not the Admiral’s tea-house. The other one, across the way,—the loud one.”

“But what did you say your friend’s name was?”

“Who, her? Susuki.”

“No, no; your Hongkong Christmas eve friend.”

“Oh, Papeeyon was his name. A funny name, eh? A Frenchman, you see.”

“Papillon?” I suggested, “that means ‘butter-fly,’ you know.”

“You don’t say! Well—Patrick, shall I spin him that yarn? For I suspect he’ll call me a liar when he’s squeezed the last of it out o’ me.”

“I was there,” announced Patrick, luxuriously smelling the end of a canteen cigar. “I was there, an’ what I saw you may take for facts. *An’*, there was a calf docthor; he knows it, too. Biddlebrick was his name—the gunboat *Skagway’s* got him now. Ask him of it bouldly if

SHORTY AND PATRICK

ever you see him,—he's a smaller man than you."

"That calf doctor was the beginnin' of it," said Shorty, borrowing my knife to scrape out his pipe with. "It was this way, you see. He *was* a—"

"Aisy, Shorty," warned Patrick. "Remember you're in decent company."

"Well, then, he was just a calf doctor o' shock-in' poor parts. He should never 'a' broke into the Service. Ol' Particular—the Skipper—was a gent o' purest ray serene, an' from him down to, an' abuttin' on, the chief Jimmy Legs—who was actually almost youman—I hadn't a kick. The work wasn't any sighin' siesta—no more than usual. But say, the chow was noble. I've et two pumelos at a meal in the Yallow Sea, an' that's fairly gaudy provisions, ain't it? But this small calf doctor was the bug in the ointment. He was a spiteful little snipe, an' he put his spite on me, for some purpose—"

"He saw you that day you were takin' him off by the barber's chairs," said Patrick. "Mugs, who was just afther latherin' me up, handed me out a cruel cut on the chin from laughin' at you then, as I remember it. Biddlebrick saw you well: he was pretendin' to look at Fatty Mul-

“ P A P E E Y O N ”

lins's tongue, for'd, on his way below to the sick-bay.”

“However that may be,” continued Shorty, “an officer an’ a gentleman wouldn’t ’a’ paid any more attention to it. But this little weeper—The Bacterium we called him between decks—he put his spite on me. An’ take it from me, there’s no end o’ ways you can be deviled by such. I was unhealthy, I was dirty, I was drinkin’ in private. He blackened me up in great shape, an’ the wardroom should ’a’ known me well, by his talk, for all kinds of a buzzard. ‘All right,’ says I to myself. ‘Some day I’ll be handin’ somethin’ to you for all this; an’ it won’t be such a sweet-scented nosegay, either.’ But I kept that in mind for quite a time before I found my way clear.

“Now it was just chance, you see, that brought me, right at the proper moment, one fine mornin’ off Woosung, to rubbin’ up bright-work by the shaft, top-side, that ran down direct to the wardroom. It was nothin’ more nor less, of course, than a phonograph with a horn attachment; what was spoken down there came up as if I was sittin’ below myself, stickin’ my nose into my wardroom sherry like one of ’em. I hear this Bacterium cheepin’ and, consequently, give ear.

SHORTY AND PATRICK

“ ‘You may laugh on,’ he was saying, ‘but I tell you that every man has more than one nature inside him. One only you see, yet a shock may bring the other out, an’ it’s no more like the first than prunes are like pants’—or words to that effect. ‘There’s nothin’ to laugh at,’ says he, ‘in the theory o’ double personalities.’

“ ‘Well, Shorty,’ says I to myself, ‘these things ain’t bright-work, but no end interestin’, showin’ what the youman mind can come to.’ So I listened again.

“ ‘I’ve read o’ that,’ I heard the Marine Major’s voice saying in reply, ‘but I should like to see a case myself, before believin’.’

“ ‘Why,’ cried out The Bacterium, ‘there’s a case of a man at home. He was a big Harp in his right mind, an’ yet he had spells when he spoke Spanish an’ thought he belonged elsewhere, in foreign Spanish parts. An’ when his family came puttin’ up a roar to be recognized, he gave ’em the hoot.’ Or, again, words to that effect. I remember the gist of it, you see, if not the language.

“ ‘Well,’ says the Marine Major’s voice, humorin’ him, like, ‘it’s interestin’, all right, but you’ve got to show *me*.’

“ ‘It’s the hope o’ my life,’ says The Bacte-

"P A P E E Y O N"

rium, very solemn, 'to find such a case for my own. An', if ever I do, I'll show it to you, Major, never fear.'

" 'Why,' says I, goin' below, to Patrick, here, 'that blitherin' little weevil of a calf doctor's all nuts aloft. He thinks he's got two men inside him. Many's the lad that's been clapped into the foolish-house for less than that!' An' I told the whole of it to Patrick.

" 'Don't you go callin' him nuts yet, Shorty,' he says. 'You're not qualified. There's more in medicine than you an' I think. I've heard talk just as crazy in Doctor Bernhauser's Lecturin' Hall and Medical Waxwork Museum, back on the old Bowery.' "

"An' that's thrue, too," Patrick interrupted, seriously. "But don't you ever go into that place! They scare the heart out o' you there." He shuddered.

"Well," resumed Shorty, "I kept turnin' it over in my mind, off an' on; an' the next day, greasin' round the hoist o' the aft turret—I was shellman for the port twelve-inch, then—I got chinnin' with a guy named Marron, a very queer guy, who knew lots o' funny truck for a jackie. You remember Marron, Patrick?"

"I do," answered Patrick, absentmindedly.

SHORTY AND PATRICK

"He went to his glory on that small scrap-heap, the *Akron*, by Ilo Ilo, a year gone come September. A very queer card, as you say, was Marron—quite educated."

"Sure. Well, to Marron I said:

"‘Marron, what do you know, if any, o’ the theory o’ double personalities?’

"Take my oath, he near fell down the hoist.

"‘Save us!’ he cries, ‘what next?’

"But he soon calmed down, an’ what he knew I heard: he was a walkin’ encyclopedia, that lad! So, presently, havin’ got a stummick-full, I went below with an indigestion o’ cruel, long words.

"I rolled into my dreamin’ sack, that night, burstin’ with ’em,—but when I turned out with the holystones, next mornin’, there was a little dab of a grand idea, dodgin’ about in the back o’ my brains.

"‘Shorty,’ says I to myself, ‘there’s the makin’ o’ something sumptuous in those words that sifted up the wardroom ventilator. With time, an’ patience, it might be done. But, it must be done very delicate—an’ private.’ That mornin’ I smiled on The Bacterium, when he came scowlin’ by, as if I loved him half to death.

“ P A P E E Y O N ”

A real wise guy would 'a' taken warnin' from that smile. . . .

“Now see how everythin' turned out for Shorty, the downtrod victim o' brutality an' spite. One day, off Woosung, the wireless detector up topside began to buzz,—it was the Admiral's wave-length at the other end, by the way the ship jumped to *that* tune. An' straight-way we went north, bouncin' over the muddy ocean billow till, just two days before Christmas, we dropped mud-hooks in Hongkong harbor.

“There she lay, huddled under the Peak, all green gardens an' clouds above, an' below all yellowish-whitish houses; an' the docks crawlin' with coolies; an' the harbor bobbin' with sampans an' yachts an' ships. As you say, there was a Russian there—a big, frowsy volunteer drippin' with dirty troops. An' there were five Britishers—I've forgotten their names, but cruisers all, savin' one. An' there was the *Admiral Costeclar*.”

Shorty, pausing, glanced at Patrick, who met that glance, bit off a large piece from the frayed remnant of his cigar, and ruminated calmly.

“The *Admiral Costeclar*, then,” I inquired, “was the Frenchman?”

SHORTY AND PATRICK

"A lovely bunch of a battleship," mused Shorty. "A big, fat, slate-blue thing, nine-tenths out o' water, an' her superstructure eruptin' in cupolas, an' spires, an' domes like a Luna Park pavilion. You know the French style."

"The Saints look down on her the day she sticks up her stern as a target forninst *our* turret," murmured Patrick, dreamily. "A sea-going Flatiron! Twelve-inch shells in an' amongst that Gothic architecture,—faith! I'd near take shame to do it!"

"But," remonstrated Shorty, "I hope you wouldn't harm my friend Papeeyon?"

"You see, Papeeyon was aboard her; Papeeyon was a sailorman o' the glad edifice the *Admiral Costeclar*. I was hangin' out o' the gun-deck ports, spittin' into the water an' eyin' a sampanful o' Jap girls goin' aboard a P. an' O. Patrick, here, comes along an' scrouges out beside me. The Jap girls fade away, gigglin', an' we watch the *Admiral Gosteclar*. Then, says I, to Patrick:

"Remember that night last year at Nagasaki when I was taken an' handled so brut'lly by those sawed-off, yallow, little police insects, for fallin' out of a tea-house window, on my head,

“ P A P E E Y O N ”

into the stummick of someone ridin' by in a rik'sha? That was the night I met a guy I like,—an', if he ain't dead yet, he's swabbin' away on that ghastly mausoleum yonder. Papeeyon was his name an', on my word, if you ever saw him in decent sailorman's clothes, instead of a starched monkey collar an' a little girl's hat, you'd swear it was me!

“Patrick gave me the laugh.

“‘All right,’ I says, ‘but if he ain't the image o' me, I hope I never see Sandy Hook Light. It scared me, meetin' him so in Nagasaki, an' likewise it scared him; an' that's how we came to get soused together. Why, if you saw him—if anyone saw him—’

“I stopped off short, jarred out o' breath by a thought. I broke away from the port, an' went reelin' along the gun-deck, intoxicated just with the bare idea of it. An' before I knew it, I fell slam into the arms o' The Bacterium, who was sneakin' up from the sick-bay.

“‘Aha!’ he hisses, holdin' me tight an' smellin' my breath. ‘Have I caught you with the goods, this time?’

“Now mark me well, what I did. I stepped back, an' wiped my hand across my forehead, an', says I, in a little, high voice:

SHORTY AND PATRICK

“‘*Comprong pah,*’ says I, just like that—
‘*Comprong pah!*’

“‘Why,’ cries The Bacterium, ‘what confounded foolishness is this?’ But Shorty, gogglin’ at him like a dead fish, he just says:

“‘*Comprong pah, m’soo!*’

“You should ‘a’ seen him yank me over against a port an’ stick his finger into my wrist.

“‘A bad pulse,’ says he, ‘an’ a rollin’ eye.’ Then I looked round an’, seein’ no one close, I took him by the sleeve, most familiar, an’ pointed out o’ the port, towards the *Admiral Costeclar*.

“‘You good m’soo,’ says I, ‘me go Franch sheep; *comprenny?*’

“‘Why,’ he says, ‘you’re plumb demented, my young man. Into the sick-bay for yours, an’ some one fat to sit on you, whilst I read up the diseases o’ the brain.’ Then, for that, I gave him all the French language I knew, in one long string—”

“What kind of French?” I asked.

“Why, mostly cussin’, I fear, an’ perhaps a few words like ‘*Je t’aime bocou*’ an’ ‘*baissy-moi,*’ that I’d picked up here an’ there. But *he* never knew the difference!

“P A P E E Y O N”

“Say, all at once I saw him turn yallow all over his face.

“‘Wow!’ he cries out, fallin’ back and slap-pin’ his forehead, ‘my sakes, if I ain’t found one!’ An’ off he goes, full speed ahead, up the gun-deck. As for me, I went over an’ leaned against a five-inch breech an’ near drew my last breath.

“‘But wait,’ says I to myself, all at once, stoppin’ short. ‘He’ll be bringin’ the whole ship an’ the quarter-deck!’ Sure enough, while I was sayin’ it, there he came, draggin’ the Marine Major an’ a lieutenant along by the sleeves, an’ half the gun-deck skulkin’ behind, pretendin’ to have duties for’d.

“He minces up to me. Says he, very soft:

“‘Tell these gentlemen, if you please, what you’ve just told me!’

“Lookin’ at him solemnly, I says:

“What’s that, sir? I haven’t said anythin’ to you to-day, sir, not that I know of.’

“‘Why,’ says he, turnin’ red, ‘you’ve just finished talkin’ to me in French!’

“‘French!’ says I. ‘Why, sir, what would I do with French?’

“The Marine Major began to laugh. The lieutenant whispered somethin’ about always

SHORTY AND PATRICK

hearin' a gurglin' noise in Biddlebrick's cabin. But The Bacterium roared out:

" 'I tell you it's so, for I heard him! He shall confess—or stay. Maybe he's a temporary ab-session only.'

" 'Sir,' says I, 'that's a hard name to call a sailorman for nothin', ain't it?' The Marine Major pulls him away an' takes him off, him sayin' as he goes:

" 'I heard him, on my heart an' soul I heard him! But I fear he's only a temporary ab-session! However, we shall see.'

"Says I to Patrick, when he came crowdin' up with the rest:

" 'What would you do, Patrick, if I called you a temporary ab-session?'

" 'My fine little man,' says he to me, 'I would warm the seat o' your whereabouts.' So there we dropped it; an' the berth-deck told the gun-deck, an' the black gang, an' the clinkers, that The Bacterium was eight more kinds of a drunken Nero.

"Now see what happened. I couldn't lose that Bacterium! Topside an' below, he squattered in my wake.

" 'I'll get him yet,' says he next mornin' to the Marine Major, in the hearin' o' Patrick.

“P A P E E Y O N ”

‘He’s a temporary absession, but he’ll go off again, never fear, an’ *I* shall be there.’

“Patrick asked me what it was all about.

“‘Leave this to me,’ I says. ‘It’s my liberty to-day, an’ perhaps to-morrow you’ll know all.’

“Well, it was my liberty, but I came near not gettin’ ashore, on account o’ that Bacterium. He couldn’t bear to let me out of his sight. Gettin’ down into the lanch, I heard him bleatin’ to the First Luff, above:

“‘He’s not all there, that man,’ says he; ‘he needs attention.’

“‘I’m the last,’ I hissed down the neck o’ Marron, who was holdin’ the lanch fast. ‘Cast off!’ With that we got away, Jimmy Legs Number One leanin’ out of a port an’ watching us with a hungry eye, knowin’ well he’d soon be snappin’ the lock on some of us. Then, we hit the beach—Hongkong, of a Christmas eve . . .”

“Quane’s Road, I like,” remarked Patrick, placidly, “Quane’s Road, an’ me in a voluptuous cane chair wid four coolies hooked to it, teeterin’ past the flower-market an’ the hotels. I don’t know a more stylish place for to air an afternoon’s undisposition.”

“Queen’s Road nothin’,” cried Shorty. There’s a straight Jap teahouse out by Happy Valley.

SHORTY AND PATRICK

I went there with Marron, ridin' high an' dry. An' later—the sun was down some time—we came sashaying back into town, to find Ship Street. An' what a town!"

"The crews of eight warships were turned loose into her," murmured Patrick, "an' the streets full o' marching marine patrols, pickin' up the *non compo' mentis* . . . But you saw it yourself."

"An', the roaring an' singing in various languages," reflected Shorty, "reminded me of a starvin' menagerie. Strings o' rik'shas flittin' up an' down, an' a highly musical sailorman in each. There was good fightin' at the mouth o' Ship Street. The Russians were throwin' teak tables out o' the top floor of a house, an' the British were stripping off the legs of 'em for clubs. Marron an' I hopped out of our chairs an' drove into it with a yell,—an' in the midst we found Patrick. What was it all about?"

"Faith," said Patrick, "I don't guess any one knew that much. 'Twas a pritty enough little go. We took sides with the English, an' claned the Russians out o' the house. Aftherwards, we all went roarin' up the street together. 'Twas then I lost Shorty."

"PAPEEYON"

"A bunch o' French came by," Shorty explained, "an' I went with 'em. I was lookin' for my friend Papeeyon."

"A grand chance you stood o' findin' him in that shriekin' Gehenna," Patrick observed.

"I found him, none the less," said Shorty. "I found him wobblin' on a table, somewhere, wheezin' a song, and wearin' a fine big lump on his forehead an' half a pair o' pants. 'Papeeyon!' I hails him. He stops an' gets me well in focus. '*Mong Jew!*' he yells out. '*Mong bon ami duh Nagasaki!*' An' he dives off the table at me, drivin' me half into the floor like a hammer 'd drive a nail. Those French are the most affectionately constituted tabasco, ain't they?"

"I took my friend Papeeyon under the shoulders an' hoisted him out into Ship Street. It made me feel funny all over to look at him: he was so much like myself. He was lally-gaggin' about on my arm, droopin', an' givin' way at the knees. In some manner or other he'd got his overshirt twisted round back-foremost so his starched collar stuck out under his chin like a bib, an' his fool of a little hat kept slidin' down over his nose; an' I declare, when I let him loose for a second, I didn't know was he comin' or goin'. I lugged him up Ship Street,

SHORTY AND PATRICK

fightin' for gangway an' watchin' out for bottles from windows. An', presently, we came to ol' Low Guie's shop. Do you know Low Guie's, by chance?"

I did not.

"No offense; it's the only place in Hong-kong *I* know where you can find a bag o' Bull an' a bottle o' Bud. We went in an', with that, my friend Papeeyon suddenly crumbled. *Fini; mo deki-agatta; ausgespielt*,—you could 'a' blown his clothes off with a twelve-inch, an' he'd no more than smiled in his sleep.

"Now, take note. Half an hour later, a badly torn French sailorman's uniform disappeared out o' Low Guie's place, by a back window. An' Shorty, in a borrowed kimono an' a pair o' those very slack Chink pants, went skippin' along in the shadows o' Ship Street, lookin' for an *Okla-homa* patrol. Seein' one turn a corner, I yelled at it from a dark spot.

" 'Patrol there!' I yelled. 'There's a disabled American in Low Guie's, back yonder.'

" 'Thanks, Johnny,' says a voice, an' they marched off, clankin' most businesslike, for the body. An', ten minutes later, I see 'em movin' back with it, slow an' stately. Says I to myself:

" 'It almost frightens me! Am I here or am

“ P A P E E Y O N ”

I there? An' I pranced up an alley, gigglin' an' crackin' my fingers,—a crazy sight I must 'a' been, with my kimono floatin' behind, a girl's kimono, too, I think: it was all over posies and birds. An', after that,— Tell him, Patrick, what happened then. I took on a very singular lapse o' memory round about that time. But Patrick here can piece it out,—he's got the ship's end of it, which I missed.”

“Sure,” said Patrick, complacently. “I was back an' aboard, havin' enjoyed myself with decorum—not forgettin' my time limit. An', next day, I had an appetite for my Christmas dinner, which some hadn't. *I'm* not the demented, plugin' shame o' the gun-deck.”

“*Is* that so!” cried Shorty. “You brought back a bum eye off some one, however.”

“My eye was hurt by the barest accident,” snapped Patrick. To me:

“I was aboard when the patrols came back with the last scrapin's from shore; I marked 'em bein' brought up the gangway.

“‘There's O'Shay,’ says I, ‘an' there's Cunion, an' he's very bad, an' there's Shorty—for Hivin's sakes look at Shorty!’ ’Twas marine guards all round, an' Lord knowed what to follow; the Jimmy Legses had the time o' their

SHORTY AND PATRICK

lives. Never in the Service did I see such a comin' aboard as that Christmas eve! Ould Particular goes rampin' up an' down his boudoir, roarin' out:

"'Do I command a bumboat, or a battleship? I shall wear these men down, for this, till anny-one could read fine print through 'em,' he says. 'Never a man shall set foot ashore again in these wathers,' he says, 'for this evening's carry-in's-on,' he says. The marine orderly, guardin' his dure, passed this out to the ship at large, an' we slept on it. In the mornin'—"

"Ah!" remarked Shorty, with relish.

"In the mornin'," Patrick continued, "all of a sudden The Bacterium, whilst nosin' round outside the brig, discovers that Number Three-one-o-five, lyin' there wid soldiers watchin' over him, can't speak annythin' but French. On my soul, 'twas a treat to see him! Up the gun-deck he kites, like so much beheaded poulthry, an' back he comes wid the Marine Major.

"'Now,' says he to Three-one-o-five, pullin' him up on his feet, 'say it again.' An' Three-one-o-five, very pale, peerin' all about, lets out a long string o' French. Then, takin' a leap, he lands by a port. An', says he, pointin' a

“ P A P E E Y O N ”

thremblin' finger at the *Admiral Costeclar* across the wather:

“ ‘Him my sheep, m'soo!’

“ ‘The same words!’ cries out The Bacterium, huggin' himself, ‘the very same words! A perfect case!’ An' with that, grabbin' Three-one-o-five, he yanks him head-first off towards the sick-bay.

“Mark you what occurred now. The First Luff came down to the sick-bay! There was innumerable lieutenants havin' business thereabouts. Soon I heard the berth deck go still as death, an'—tramp, tramp, tramp—came Ould Particular himself, pretendin' not to be interested in annythin', an' the Marine Major taggin' him, chatterin':

“ ‘A remarkable case, sir! He speaks nothin' but French!’ They all went in through the sick-bay dure.

“Then, all at once, we heard a hubbub up top-side; an' down the ladder, escorted in style by Jimmy Legs Number One, very bilious an' shaky, wearin' a pair o' Chink pants an' a dirty white vest, comes Shorty, when, by every token, he should 'a' been in the best o' company in the sick-bay.

“The berth deck saw him an' gave a groan o'

SHORTY AND PATRICK

horror. An' at that, out o' the sick-bay dure comes the Skipper, the First Luff, the Marine Major, and The Bacterium, an' claps eyes to him, where he stands in his baggy breeches.

"Holy! The Bacterium gives a squeak o' pure fright, runs in to look at what's inside, an' then runs out to look at Shorty. Then he runs in again, an' drags out Shorty's French-speakin' double. An' I think the Skipper himself was near to fallin' down at the sight. But says he, whilst advancin' rapidly on Shorty:

"'Clear those men, yonder, away,' he says. 'Now then, you! The quick truth out o' you.'

"Shorty started to chatter his teeth—"

"Small wonder!" cried Shorty. "I counted on a calf doctor, not a whole wardroom, an' the captain's cabin thrown in! I thought it was my last day.

"'Sir,' says I, chatterin', 'I've been used shamef'llly, sir. I've been knocked out on the beach, an' all my back pay stolen, sir, an' my uniform gone, sir, an' it's more dead than alive I am, sir, an' that's the truth, sir, so help me.'

"'An' who's this, then?' says the Skipper, facin' about.

"'Why,' I says, strikin' not much of an attitude, 'I do believe he's got my uniform on! I

“ P A P E E Y O N ”

don't know, I'm sure, who'd play such a joke on me. Why! He looks like me, too, sir!

“ ‘Looks like you!’ snaps Ol' Particular, ‘he's your twin, I'm thinkin’.’ An' stampin' away topside, he wigwags the *Admiral Costeclar*, askin' if they've lost a sailorman. They had, an' much obliged to Ol' Particular. They'd send for him at once. So Ol' Particular says, wigwagging in return:

“ ‘Then send a uniform, too, unless you want him naked.’

“ ‘They did so, an' I ain't seen Papeeyon since. He was all up in the air; he never understood it. I'll bet it's the romance of his life, to this day.’

“ ‘And afterwards?’

“ ‘Ha! ha! They never fastened it on me; an' no one ever heard,—save Patrick here. You see, there were no proofs. I got off with two days' solitary, for stragglin'!

“ ‘It's some sailorman's joke,’ says the Skipper to the First Luff, in private, ‘an' I'm thinkin' that if it hadn't been for Biddlebrick we should both 'a' saved bunches o' dignity. Curses on Biddlebrick,’ says he, ‘an' his theories.’

“ ‘Cordially the same,’ says the First Luff.

“ ‘But The Bacterium never was himself again.

SHORTY AND PATRICK

I think he was on, an' just helpless. For some reason, he left us in Manila Bay, not long after, for a bum gunboat,—I hope they can digest him. I'm leanin' out of a port as he goes down the gangway, an' he sees me there. Says I, very soft:

“‘*Ajew, m'soo.*’

“No one heard but him. An' I smiled at him like I loved him half to death. . . .”

III

THE ICHI-BAN MASCOT

WHEN she arrived in New York harbor from Spring target practice, the U. S. S. *Oklahoma*, First Rate, got scant space in the newspapers. She had won back the great-guns record from the Fleet at large; her cinnamon bear mascot had been buried overboard; the one-pound Hotchkiss guns in her fighting tops had been replaced by range-finders, *à la Japonaise*. That was all the published news, and to me it seemed inadequate. For, before she had joined the Fleet for target practice, the *Oklahoma* had been on a congenial mission in the Mediterranean Sea. There had been, all about her stout, steel sides, the thrumming of guitars, the laughter of Latin women, the popping of rockets, and the crashing of salutes to royalty. What wonderful, new, informal histories must be hidden,

SHORTY AND PATRICK

now, between her decks! I knew of two tale-spinners dwelling there, who would have something to relate to me. With them I made a twilight rendezvous in Sands Street, which runs down to the eagle-topped gates of the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

The evening was still and warm. The air was full of echoing evening noises: children's shrill cries, a street piano's meager rattle, the ripple of boots on stone,—for a thin stream of men was flowing from the Navy Yard: workmen out of the shops and six o'clock liberty men off of the ships. Presently, from this column, rolled briskly Shorty, my seaman of the *Oklahoma*, looking in his loose blue very clean and cool, as was his habit, and pleasantly impudent, as was his custom. He wasted little time on greetings, being, as I could perceive, full of malicious joy.

"I've just seen a very disgustin' sight," he said, catching me by the arm, "very disgustin'! Do you care to be nauseated—would you like your stummick turned for you? Look here, then."

He led me to one of the open, lower windows of the Sailormen's Y. M. C. A. building. Inside, alone at a table in the dining-room, facing us but unconscious of our scrutiny, sat a big,

THE ICHI-BAN MASCOT

lean, sandy Irishman in blue. He was devouring strawberry shortcake, and raising to his freckled, melancholy face, from time to time, a glass of milk. As he made play with those viands, he seemed mostly moving mouth, jumping Adam's apple, and red, bony hands.

"Aha!" remarked Shorty in hollow, carrying tones. "The solitary debauchee! The coarse, unblushin' rooey!"

"Roué," I suggested, *sotto voce*.

"The coarse, unblushin' rooay!" distinctly repeated Shorty, with a smack of lips.

Patrick looked up from his plate, cocked his head, and stared out at us. Slowly, over his working countenance spread recognition. He mumbled thickly through his shortcake.

"Shame!" shouted Shorty, leaping and waving his arms. "Cussin' in the Y. M. C. A.! Have him out! Where's the devil-dodgin' deck officer?"

Patrick, lounging calmly from the dining-room, joined us. Shaking hands with me, entirely ignoring his shipmate, he remarked:

"A very pritty evenin' comin' on, eh? It'll be a dizzy night along the Isezak'cho—only, bein' daylight there, you'd largely lose the effect, I'm thinkin'."

SHORTY AND PATRICK

"All polite-o!" from Shorty, snub nose tilted. "Strawberries an' milk an' a lisp. You blither-in', hairy ol' Mayparty!"

Patrick continued to look at me.

"Do I hear a squeakin'?" he inquired, pleasantly. "Did you bring a dog wid you, then—ah! You should fetch a chair along, Shorty, my fine, little squideen, to stand on when you wish to be noticed."

Shorty chuckled gently.

"You ol' effete milk-swallower," he said, affectionately, linking elbows with his friend. Then, suddenly:

"Well, what's the course?"

"It's only thirty minutes to the Island—"

"An' there goes the equipage. Full speed does it!"

Over rough cobblestones we chased an open trolley car. In its last seat, we made ourselves comfortable amid much smoke. The hot, stale night breeze caught that smoke-cloud—its elements were Durham, canteen stogie, and latakia—and blew it out to the rear platform, where suddenly burst forth, in chorus, profane exclamations of astonishment.

I asked at large:

"And how's the Happy-Ship?"

THE ICHI-BAN MASCOT

"You may 'a' heard somethin' of a record?" chirruped Patrick, with the calmness of great pride. "Make no mistake, 'twas our turret."

I shook his big hand.

"You've lost the bear, too, I hear."

"Who—little Archibaldus Fleachaser? Why, Archie did his dyin' stunt when we were in the Meditherranean; that's ancient history you're steppin' into now. We've had an' lost mascots a-plenty since him."

Shorty, on my other side, suddenly wriggled with delight.

"Patrick," he murmured huskily, "I'm goin' to tell him that one, though he won't believe it."

"About Charles MacTavish Noble?"

"Nothin' less. About Charles, an' the Gordons at Gibraltar, an' the Spanish King at Cadiz. *An'*, when I've done, he'll have me for a bigger liar than ever."

"Who was Charles MacTavish Noble?"

"He was our mascot after little Archie. For one week we had him, an' near enough he came to plungin' us into war with two separate foreign powers. You won't believe that we saw a Highlander regiment ready to swim aboard us with their bayonets in their teeth, on his account. *An'* as for the Spanish King—"

SHORTY AND PATRICK

Shorty, clapping his hand across his mouth, hid an amazing facial convulsion.

"Listen. We came from Naples to Marseilles, an' from there to Gibraltar. Ever in Naples? I was in Naples all one evenin', an' the streets are disgustin'ly rough for poor, tired feet. Likewise, I was at Marseilles, but there was no liberty; the most I saw o' that place was a bunch o' big, stone docks, an' a dame in yallow tights, on the end o' one o' them, tyin' herself into half-hitches, on a chunk o' carpet."

"What!" I cried.

"You see, Patrick, he has me for a liar already, an' I ain't laid tongue to that ship's mascot scandal! I tell you she was kinkin' herself up into half-hitches an' bowline-knots on the end o' the dock, with a crowd standin' round; an' she had on yallow tights, for, I says to Harah, while watchin' her out o' the same port—"

"You mean she was a *contorsioniste*?"

"Well, I'm usually leery o' callin' names, particularly where the fair sex is concerned—"

"Whisht!" murmured Patrick, suddenly opening his eyes. "Get on to Gibraltar, Don Wan, an' omit that feminine scenery, *ong route*."

"Ha! Don Wan, hey? I remember, now, in that connection, when Patrick here was lally-

THE ICHI-BAN MASCOT

gaggin' about in Eastern waters, there was a very handsome chawcolate-colored Manila belle came down on the string-piece, one day, smokin' a seegar, an' lookin' over the liberty parties for her husband—her red-headed, flannel-mouthed, double-faced husband, says she. An' Patrick, who was bein' towed ashore in a workin' boat, when he put eye to her, he lay down in the bottom—”

A big, freckled hand, swiftly reaching across me, seized Shorty by his neckerchief.

“As I was sayin’,” shouted Shorty, hastily, “when we came to Gibraltar—

“There were three British cruisers an' about half a hundred torpedo boats inside the breakwater. Company manners we kept, an' the coxswains o' the runnin' boats got all worn out standin' an' touchin' caps at the English, passin' by in their cutters. We had the Captain o' the *Hercules* aboard, an' the Captain o' the *Caligula*, an' the Captain o' the *Mercury*—but, say, that's no proper name for a ship: that's a medicine! However, they boarded us, an' Ol' Particular, takin' his chapeau out o' tin, he boarded them with every ceremony. An' Patrick an' I went ashore, that evenin', to inhale the scenery

SHORTY AND PATRICK

up an' down the Alameda, whilst a red band played, an' the girls clicked by on their high heels, with combs a foot tall stuck into their back hair. Those girls! Ah! Save us, what eyes!"

"There now," remarked Patrick, dryly, to me, "if there's a gurrul widin sight of a tale o' Shorty's, he'll drag her into it an' go on wheezing over her like a force draft. 'What eyes,' says he! Faith, what hands, he'd be better sayin. A good smack on the jaw he took off one o' them, that night, the giddy, sawed-off flirt!"

"I only asked her the time of evening'!" cried Shorty, passionately.

"Thru for you; but how? 'I ask you,' says he, wid a smirk, 'because I see very well you've got your clocks wid you.' "

"'With weemin, a bold an' dashin' air,'" muttered Shorty, evidently quoting, in limp extenuation . . . "But, as I was goin' to say: whilst blowin' up an' down the Alameda, we met three soldiers in kilts—Highlanders, Gordons—very snappy lookin' men, with tight white jackets, an' gaiters, an' bare knees, an' dinky little caps hangin' over an ear. Good mixers, those Gordons: ten seconds after borrowin' a

THE ICHI-BAN MASCOT

light off 'em, we were sneakin' up on a drink, five abreast . . ."

"What's that street where the Pipes an' Drums march through at sundown?" queried Patrick, drowsily. "A street full o' little garglin'-parlors, some three hundred an' chu, I should say, startin' at one end an' emergin' at the other, —if possible."

"The first of 'em, at any rate, was runnin' over with Gordons," said Shorty, "*an'* with them was Charles MacTavish Noble."

"It was a little wine shop, you see—Café de Bomba—full o' smoke an' kilts. An', in the midst o' the kilts, all hunched up on a chair, sits a small, hairy gorilla in the Gordons' uniform. The only thing on earth as black as him was the galley flue; so says I, comin' up:

"'Why, if there ain't Charlie Noble!'

"'He is not,' says a big Scotchman, with red hair an' a jaw like a horse. 'His name is MacTavish.'

"'His name is Charles MacTavish Noble,' says I, 'an' I should know, for I've got his own cousin here with me—' "

"Another crack like that—" warned Patrick, gazing, with half shut eyes, past me at Shorty. Shorty, moved stealthily away.

SHORTY AND PATRICK

"We sat down among the Gordons," he continued, "an' between sips we heard the history o' little Charlie.

"He was caught, hoppin' an' skippin' across the spine o' the Rock, in his early infancy, by a Red Battery. The Red Battery trained him up to be a fine, manly little fella, wearin' breeches an' gettin' ballerino whenever he could lay hand to a bottle o' beer, an' devourin' black tobacco like a youman Christian. But when the Red Battery took ship to go home, little Charlie was missin'. They sailed without him, cussin' back over the taffrail at the Gordons an' swearin' they'd pinched him. Which they had, at that—breeches, bad habits an' all. For, when next he appeared to public view, he came flouncin' forth in kilts an' a service cap, as mascot to those Highlanders. An' so he'd stayed till the night we met them.

"I wish you could 'a' seen him, sittin' all hunched up on his chair in that shop, in the midst o' those big, sandy Gordons, with his black paw coiled round a bottle o' Bass, lookin' as mournful as Patrick, here, under stoppage o' pay. 'There's a little fella,' says I to myself, 'an *ichi-ban* mascot—a number one mascot—that makes our late Archie look rotten.' An', with

THE ICHI-BAN MASCOT

that, a feelin' crawls over me that I could swipe Charles MacTavish Noble with the most voluptuous relish.

"We got very pleasant with the Gordons—Patrick an' I—very pleasant an' musical. The Gordons sang a song called 'Pibroch o' Corrichie,' an' Patrick sang 'Savourneen Delish,' an' I obliged with 'Don't Censor Her, She Done It for the Best.' Then we had a speech off Charles MacTavish Noble's chaperon—the one with the jaw like a horse—prayin' for war. Then we all lay back an' put our arms round each other's necks an' sang 'London Town.' Little Charlie joined in with a whistling an' chirpin' that Patrick mistook for the bos'n pipin' down hammocks,—so he started to pull off his shoes. The next thing you know, we were scufflin' down the most cobble-some street that was ever laid out in front of a pair o' weak legs. There were only four of us left: there was Patrick, an' I, an' the big, horse-jawed Gordon locked together, an' little Charlie Noble taggin' behind, bein' yanked along by the paw.

At the bottom o' that street lay a sea wall. An' 'way out beyond, I saw a little string o' shroud lights, high up in the dark, winkin' con-

SHORTY AND PATRICK

tinu'lly: three reds an' a white, three reds an' a white, three reds an' a white.

" 'Patrick,' says I, 'the acumen o' those signal boys is disgustin',—waitin' for us to heave in sight, an' then callin' the last boat back. You an' I, Patrick, have broke liberty.'

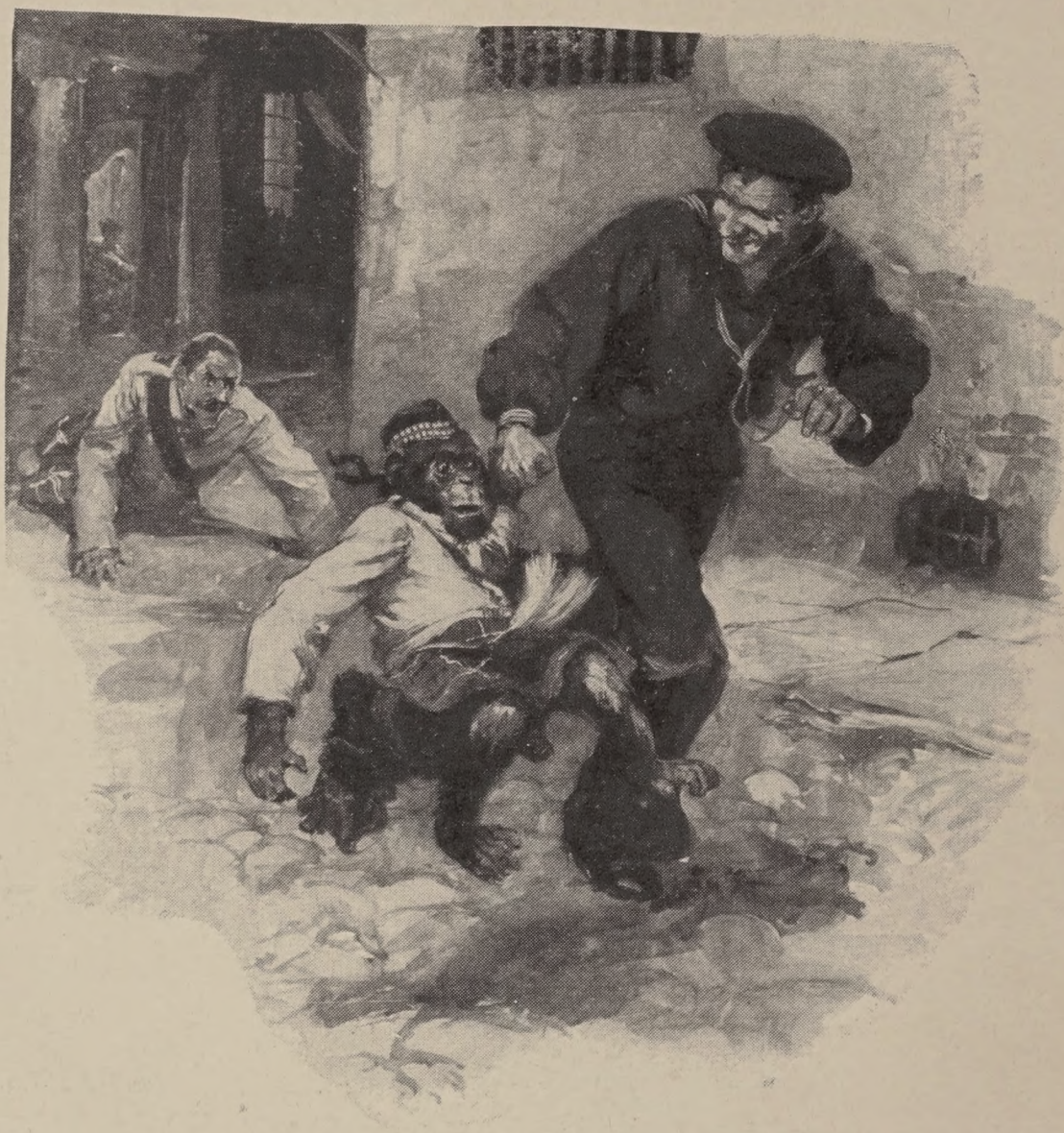
" 'Forget it,' says the big Gordon, rockin' about an' tryin' to light a cigar in the middle. 'I don't doubt there's a patrol lookin' for MacTavish an' me; but d'you see any pearls o' grief in *my* eyes? MacTavish's face ain't visibly distorted, either, is it? Take a look. *We* ain't disturbed; let 'em come. The sooner, the better; I want 'em to see this before it's worn off any.' D' you know, I ruther liked that fella.

"Says Patrick:

" 'All well enough for him; but I've got good conduct badges to loose. Let's take a chance at the landin', wherever it lies. Ol' Bare-knees here'll guide us.'

" 'Sure,' says the big Gordon, 'I'll guide you.' An', with that, he starts off, whoopin' an' boundin', little Charlie bumpin' the cobbles at the end of his arm, an' us clatterin' behind. I'll bet that was the neat procession, looked at in cold blood!

"Slammin' round a curve, the big Gordon



“Slidin’ after me over the cobbles, sittin’ down and actin’ very reluctant.”

THE ICHI-BAN MASCOT

slips up, like a house fallin', an' takes it on his chin. As for little Charlie, he flies over his guardian's head, most spectacular, an' sits down hard, quite some ways on, with his kilts up under his arms.

"'For'd, lads, an' at 'em!' wheezes the big Gordon, wagglin' his hands up at us, from where he lay. 'Follow the pipes, but harkee, don't forget to tell the stretchers o' my whereabouts.'

"Peerin' down the street, I saw the landin'. Patrick stops half-way, to find out what was keepin' me. I had hold o' little Charlie by the paw, an' he was slidin' after me over the cobbles, still sittin' down and actin' very reluctant.

"'What's eatin' you?' yells Patrick. 'Here's the lanch yet. Drop him an' run.'

"'He says he's comin' aboard,' I shouts, givin' little Charlie a yank that nearly took off his arm. 'He says he's sick o' bein' corrupted by these red-necked Scotch bally-dancers, an' wishes to be a battleship mascot, amongst his equals.' I gave Charlie another jerk that discouraged him with sittin' down, an' the next minute he came along at a gallop. We pounded down on the landin' just as Carrol,

SHORTY AND PATRICK

the coxswain o' the lanch, was layin' his hand on the indicator.

" 'Holy Murder!' howls Carrol, tryin' to duck behind the wheel. 'What's that with you?'

" 'He's a mascot,' says I, heavin' him into the coxswain's box.

" 'He'll never be allowed,' says Carrol. 'He should not be on this lanch. You'll be reduced, Shorty; you're in liquor; I can smell it from here.'

" 'You wish you had it yourself,' says I. 'As for Charles MacTavish Noble, he shall go aboard with permission, an' presently he shall be enrolled, all in order. Mascots amuse the men, says the Skipper, an' must be borne with. He's no end more respectable than little Archibaldus, at that; I haven't seen him scratch himself once, since I met him.'

" 'Very well,' says Carrol, lookin' at me an' lickin' his lips. You see, he was anticipatin' trouble.

" 'We came alongside the ship. You'll recollect, perhaps, abaft o' the port gangway, there's a sea ladder runs up the side, past one o' the guns, on the gun-deck? Well, all of a sudden, out from between my legs, with a squeak, whips little Charles. He takes the gunwale without

THE ICHI-BAN MASCOT

touchin', swings up that ladder, an' pops, head first, in through the gun-deck port,—all before I had time to so much as make a pass at him.

“‘Aha! Now then,’ says Carrol, smirkin’ at me. ‘It’s my unpleasant duty to make a report of this, on touchin’ the deck. A gorilla at large in the gun-deck, sir, brought out by so an’ so, against the urgent advice o’ the coxswain, sir.’ He irritated me, that Carrol, an’ I handed him a few remarks,—just a few, but very thorough-goin.’ An’, as luck must have it, the chief Jimmy Legs heard me, from topside.

“I was half-way into my hammock when our Division Officer sent for me in his cabin, for a short heart-to-heart. I found him sittin’ on the edge of his bunk, with his blouse hooked up over his pink pajamas.

“‘What’s this,’ says he, ‘about a gorilla aboard?’

“I told him how I found little Charlie hangin’ round the landin’, expressin’ *ongwee*, and how, considerin’ him to be the perfect picture of a mascot, I brought him out. Likewise, how he climbed in through the gun-deck port, before I’d got permission for him.

“‘He isn’t to be found, so I’m informed,’ says the Division Officer, lookin’ at me uncommonly

SHORTY AND PATRICK

stern. 'He's at large on this ship, an' in hidin'. Your actions are unusual,' says he, 'not to say *spiritus frumenti*, an' to-morrow mornin' I shall take pleasure in makin' Ol' Particular's eyes stick out, with all this—' ”

“He said that!”

“Gee, no; I'm tonin' his language down. Those words are mine; his were simply disgustin'!

“Say, would you believe it—from the minute he popped in through that port, little Charlie was clean evaporated! No one on the gun-deck saw him then or afterwards. You know what chance a grown man ud have, hidin' aboard a battleship. How did little Charlie do it?

“In the mornin', the whole ship was wise that we should have a mascot somewhere, but where? On my word, the *Oklahoma* was beat for him from funnels to double bottom; I think the clinkers shifted about ten tons in the bunkers; the black gang went peerin' about the works of her with wrenches for self-defense; an' the Fifth Division was actu'lly unlockin' magazines an' shellrooms—those bein' the last places where no one had looked. Ol' Particular sits up behind his cut-glass ink bottles, in private, an' chews the ends of his whiskers.

THE ICHI-BAN MASCOT

“‘Oh, no,’ says he—so I’ve been told—‘this can’t be a battleship—it’s a pantomime theayter! A gorilla hidin’ aboard, now! He’ll starve, an’ expire, an’ the quarantine officers ’ll come an’ boot us out into open sea.’

“‘We’ll certainly find him then, sir, however,’ the Navigator says, soft but hopeful.

“‘Who is this knockabout clown that brought him aboard?’ barks the Skipper. ‘Aha! I know him! An’ this ain’t the first time, either! But I’m goin’ to make it the last, if I have to bury him!’ Nicely spoken an’ very comfortin’ to Shorty, was it not? Yes, indeed, it was not.

“Cunnion, the mail orderly, on goin’ ashore that mornin’, meets a big Gordon in a quiet place near the post office. ‘Where’s MacTavish, you thief in the night?’ says the Gordon, an’ hands Cunnion a black eye that he brings back an’ airs as Exhibit A in the causes for international war. Five Kilts came down on the landin’ an’ danced, cussin’ the first runnin’ crew that touched there. ‘Where’s that big, bright-red Irishman,’ they whoops, ‘an’ that handsome, intelligent-lookin’ little fella called Shorty? Send ’em ashore, till we do a fling on the pits o’ their stummicks—you double-faced pirates,

SHORTY AND PATRICK

you!' Carrol, comin' back, reports on it. 'The *entente cordiale*,' says he, 'is astonishin'.'

"Another day we stayed there, an' I'm told—I was in retirement then, technic'lly for bein' heard blackguardin' Carrol in the lanch—that it was no end vivacious. Patrick, here, turned himself into a youman 'extra': every time he came below, he sneaked up to the door o' the brig an' passed the latest news through the air-holes.

"'Scrubbin' sails an' boat-covers, topside,' he'd say—'an' four Gordons in a dingey alongside, cursin' up with words I never heard before. It's an education . . . Carrol was ambushed on the landin' an' soaked with a volley o' stale lemons—he's as sickenin' a sight as ever you saw. . . . The Skipper's pretendin' to look for structural weaknesses in the hull,—but we know he thinks little Charlie's lurkin' there . . . A lieutenant has gone ashore to the Gordons' officers' quarters to swear on the Book they shall have little Charlie the minute he's found . . . Fatty Mullins is in the sick-bay, havin' the surgeon stick rods up his nose to straighten it—he's just back from the beach.'

"Next mornin' we left—an' little Charlie not caught. Can you beat it? The Skipper said

THE ICHI-BAN MASCOT

the brute had swum ashore, the ship havin' been done with a fine-tooth comb. So we sailed away leavin' a line o' Gordons hoppin' along the sea-wall after us, wavin' their fists, an' roarin' into the wind like so many hyenas.

"Presently, we arrived at the charmin' port o' Cadiz . . . By which time, I was at large again—"

"An' very popular," interjected Patrick, dryly.

"Yep; there was Mullins an' Cunnion blamin' their noses an' eyes on me,—likewise, whoever else had suffered violence ashore, I was the one that had it taken out of him. However, avoidin' details—

"We came to Cadiz. Needless to say, I didn't noticeably disembark. I saw *my* Cadiz off the deck; but judgin' from samples that rowed out in boats, with zitters, singin' '*Besos y Pesos*' an' makin' eyes, it was somethin' of a place.

"Now, the King o' Spain was there, by chance, on the protected cruiser *Don Wan de Vera*. The second mornin', all at once the *Oklahoma* began to crawl with business. It was Saturday—'inspect bags an' beddin''—but it was forget that, an' tumble out, an' go crazy with brass rags an' ki-yis,—an' the six-pounder

SHORTY AND PATRICK

salutin' shells bein' brought up, an' the signal boys draggin' the flag-bags for a Spanish ens'n. So, by this an' that, we knew whom we'd have aboard.

"The crew turns into blue—full marine guard to be paraded, *et cet'ra*. The wardroom began to show special full dress. The Captain's orderly, goin' down to the marine country to primp, remarked, in passin' by:

"'There's typhoons in Ol' Particular's cabin. His best chapeau's gone, an' his dress pants are split up the back most mysterious, an' that Jap valley's gettin' his. Who'd go an' swipe a chapeau off the Skipper, or split his pants? But everyone's gettin' that bug, from the Skipper down! Look at the berth-deck cook, shoutin' that all his buns were pinched over night! An' Mulligan, complainin' yesterday that the canteen lock was broke an' a bunch o' pies an' plug tobacco gone! What do they think this is—a floatin' reformatory?'

"I said nothin', bein' suddenly struck with a thought that made me quite sick to my stummick.

"By an' by, all havin' been arranged an' tidied, the bos'n pipes quarters. The Spanish flag was ready to be broke out at the maintruck; the

THE ICHI-BAN MASCOT

band lolled about on their horns, with their mouths pursed up for the Spanish anthem; eight side-boys stood at the gangway. Ol' Particular straddled down the quarter-deck in his second-best chapeau, an' all the officers followin'. A bunch o' silence ensued . . .

"Across the water came a barge, with the King o' Spain sittin' up in the sheets all twiddlin', in the sun, with medals an' gold lace. But Shorty was lookin', all the while, straight an' glassy, at Ol' Particular's second-best chapeau.

"The drums cut loose with four flourishes; the Spanish ens'n was broke out aloft; the Skipper chucked himself into his uniform. An' on the quarterdeck stood the Spanish King.

"The whole ship was frozen at the salute, savin' Ol' Particular, who advanced on his toes. The Spanish King tapped his chapeau, an' shook. A very solemn scene. I'll leave it to Patrick. An act o' history,—the war forgotten, friends once more, an' so on . . .

"An' then, lookin' across at the row opposite, I saw Fatty Mullins gapin' up over my head, into the air, as if he saw somethin' horrible. Then I saw Carrol, next to him, look up an' go green all over his face. Then, the whole row

SHORTY AND PATRICK

across from me looked up an' dropped their jaws. An' then the marine guard, aft, looked up an' wobbled their guns; an' the side-boys, further aft still, looked up an' groaned out loud; an', at that, the officers, the Skipper, an' the Spanish King looked up, with their eyes hangin' out on their faces. An' not a sound out o' the len'th an' breadth o' the battleship *Oklahoma*, except Patrick, standin' not far from me, cryin' out 'Holy!' all at once, in a heart-renderin' voice.

"Leanin' over the edge o' the fightin' top o' the mainmast, regardin' us, as blazay as ever you saw, was Charles MacTavish Noble. He was wearin' Ol' Particular's best chapeau cocked over one ear, an' one sleeve o' his white Gordon's jacket, an' that's all. He had a lump in his face from half a plug o' tobacco. His whiskers were full o' canteen pie.

"There wasn't a stir out o' the whole ship,—just a gapin' up at Charles MacTavish Noble. He looked down, like a swell takin' notice of a lot o' hogs. Then, impudently leanin' one elbow on the edge o' the fightin' top, an' knockin' Old Particular's chapeau further over his ear, he delib'ately stuck out his tongue at the King o' Spain!"

THE ICHI-BAN MASCOT

"Shorty!"

"Ask Patrick," said Shorty, calmly.

"Would you hear the truth, then?" Patrick inquired, raising himself, and staring stonily at Shorty. "Well then, he's a—"

"I ain't!" roared Shorty, drowning out his voice.

"Now," I said, "if I'm to swallow any of it, you must clear up a few details. For instance, afterward—"

"In a crate," began Patrick, "neatly addressed—"

"Oh, say, ain't that enough?" piped Shorty. "Ain't *that* what you'd call a situation? Don't ask us to spoil it! Besides, what a thing to have happen aboard our ship. Draw a veil! Draw a veil!"

"Patrick?"

Patrick was staring ahead, into the indigo night, to where, under a mellow, tremulous, far-extending nimbus, great fantastic twists of architecture blazed as if constructed of white fire.

"There she lies," he murmured, sucking his teeth in esthetic joy. "Ah—you were sayin'?"

"That story—"

"Well—" He glanced at Shorty. Slowly over his face spread a sweet Irish smile.

SHORTY AND PATRICK

"In the main, then, he's a faithful hithorian o' the Happy-Ship," said Patrick. "Faithful, though prolific, an' accurate, though—ah—fertile."

With the cool, salt breeze, flavored by sea and fields, blowing in our faces, swiftly we slid from gloom to brightness and, at length, into the throbbing, glittering, white heart of the Island.

"*A bas* with yarns," cried Shorty, briskly, springing down on the ground and hitching up his trousers, "who'd tell 'em when he's got the chance to make 'em? Come on! Let's take an' stand this place on one end!"

IV

PICTURE-GALLERY GEORGE

SHORTY and Patrick, in liberty blue and new, gilt hat-ribbons, were captives of mine in an East Side café of Teutonic flavor. With a table I had penned them in an alcove, and had posted near them a stout sentinel in white and black. I was determined to be evicted from the balconies of no more theaters that evening,—a consequence natural even at an Amateur Night in Fourteenth Street, when one's companions, missing an inefficient actor with their missiles, damage the scenery.

My prisoners sat in that cramped attitude from which Americans, alone, get comfort: on their backbones, their knees on a level with their chins, their shins wedged against the table's edge. Their lean, brown faces revealed smug satisfaction,—at recollection, doubtless, of their

SHORTY AND PATRICK

disgrace. It was Shorty who voiced that state of mind.

"At any rate," said he, sucking his teeth complacently, "the crowd was with us."

I remembered how, at that shameful moment, the gallery mob, approving my friends' emphatic form of criticism, had clambered up on its seats to bawl profane protests at our off-taking.

"The noise was turrible," reflected Shorty, proudly. "*Not* only in the pea-nut, but in the orchestra as well. Piercin' screams from the orchestra. Prob'ly society girls, gone off their topknots at our puril . . ."

"I think it was a guy fell out o' the balcony," remarked big Patrick, calmly.

"No!" cried Shorty, his face brightening. "You don't say! Out o' the balcony, hey! Just delib'rately, I suppose! Patrick, don't you let me forget to buy a yellow journal in the mornin'."

"Do you think they'll print it?" inquired Patrick of me, seriously.

"With the names?" asked Shorty. "The only time I ever got into the papers," he said plaintively, "they spelt my name so that I was a liar every time I passed the clippin' round. That

PICTURE-GALLERY GEORGE

was a night at Barnum's. . . . Have you got the makin's? Thanks."

After our sentinel had come and gone:

"What about that night at Barnum's?"

"Oh, that," said Shorty, sliding down on his spine again, his glass trembling on one high knee, "was nothin' but the *denou'mont*! An' the rest of it's spread over half the world; too long, with my liberty up at one, an' Wallabout Channel miles away . . ."

Perhaps I stared at this sudden virtue.

"There'll be no come-back on your ship tomorrow," I tempted him. "You know your skipper's ashore, at the big dinner downtown?"

"No danger this time," said Shorty, cynically. "He was tight at the last one an' subsequently made a show of himself."

"A show of himself!"

"Well, all I know: afterwards, comin' up the starboard ladder from the lanch, he slides down three steps on his buttons. An' at that, he says, very fretfully:

"'I wish,' he says, 'those Jap coolies would quit oilin' the stairs in these places.'"

"Conclusive, eh?" drawled Patrick. "But what volumes o' histhory are those, Shorty, to take so long tellin'?"

SHORTY AND PATRICK

"Well . . . Have you forgotten our Picture-Gallery George?"

Patrick smiled, suddenly for him.

"Ould George, the Work-of-Art? Faith, it takes me back! Yokohama, Kobe—"

"*'Nagasaki, Yokohama.*

"*'Kobe maru hoi!'*—chanted Shortly, nasally and surprisingly geisha-like. "The whole bunch o' ports, each participatin' in the ruin o' Picture-Gallery George . . ."

"Take the credit; 'twas you hounded him to his grave."

"Grave! You'd think he was dead. He's a great man in his line to-day, makin' a fortune, an' me to thank. I'm his philanthropist. I made him what he is."

"You did that," assented Patrick, grinning.

"An' what return does he make when he sees me long afterwards," declaimed Shorty, passionately, "an' him all bloated up in the midst of his successes? On sight, he tries to jump through me. It needed three cops—"

"Wait; I'll tell it from the beginnin'.

"You see, George should never 'a' gone into the Service. He mistook his callin': he was no sailorman; he was a born bum actor. One o' those smooth, oily guys with a shaved neck, an'

PICTURE-GALLERY GEORGE

a bang he could chew the end of. Every move a picture. An' stuck on his shape? Say! In the shower-baths he was forever humpin' up his shoulders an' pinchin' his muscles, tryin' to get a hand. He had himself mugged at a photographer's in Yokohama, in a pair o' swimmin' tights, with his arms folded so as to bulge out his biceps, an' a grin on his face to make you sick to your stummick with pity for him. One day the bunch, washin' up, begun to remark what a finely developed chest George had. An' George, havin' swelled himself out with wind as far as he'd go, hadn't the heart to let it out an' collapse an' spoil the tableau. He got quite faint, just from suffocatin' himself; he had to lie down in the suds and be slapped. We thought his heart had stopped on him.

"That's the kind George was . . . till I got through with him."

"I gather that you disliked George?"

Patrick smiled discreetly.

"I couldn't bear him," said Shorty with apparent frankness.

"Why?"

Patrick took elaborate interest in the lighting of his cigar. Shorty drawled:

SHORTY AND PATRICK

"Well, this George, you see, he had a notion when girls were concerned—"

"Ah, which one was it? The New York girl in Hongkong who used to cry to hear the Elevated again? That pretty, red-headed one at Manila? Or some other, at home?"

"Not me; not me!" protested Shorty, blushing. "It was a friend o' mine. An' George, with his shaved neck an' his hair all perfumed off the barber, fixes my friend with her. He tells her to look at the tattooin' on my friend's arm."

"At that there weren't but three or four initials there, an' one 'Ada,' an' a brace o' bleedin' hearts on a skewer. Don't suppose you ever saw Kelly, the bos'n's mate? In his young days he got himself so covered with girls' initials an' silly mottoes, that he looks like a tree in a picnic grounds. An' yet, it makes *him* solid at home. His wife thinks he was the whole thing in his youth; she can hardly imagine how she came to get him away from the rest. Ain't they funny, though?"

Taking advantage of that moment of speculation, I reached for Shorty's left wrist. But he, suddenly comprehending, defended himself in a frenzy. The clatter of glasses and furniture was prodigious. It ended in Shorty's personal

PICTURE-GALLERY GEORGE

victory as, flaming red, he braced his chair in the corner, and threatened with his brandished heels.

"If you'll treat me right, now," he said, pathetically, "I'll go on an' tell this. I'm tryin' to entertain you, an' you assault me. Anyone but you, I'd say it was hardly gentlemanly.

"I was goin' to say how this George wasn't satisfied with what he'd already done. On cruise, whenever we came into port, George would make out that he'd been dealt a letter from that girl who couldn't stand for year-old tattoo marks. He'd come round wagglin' a chunk o' light-blue paper, an' making out to read it. Once, on the gun-deck, he said to me:

" 'Congratulate me, Shorty, I'm goin' to be a married man when my term's up.'

" 'Oh, are you?' says I. 'Well, I dare say you'll make a lovely bunch as one,' I says.

" 'Nothin' but,' he says. 'The day's set, an' I'm as happy as a lark.' An' he shuffled a clog on the linoleum, to prove it. 'An' I consider myself very fortunate,' he says, 'that I'm not disfigured with the relics of a disorderly past, to shock a sweet, young girl.'

"Thinks I: 'Wait, Shorty. Don't soak him. Somethin' longer an' more lingerin'. Somethin'

SHORTY AND PATRICK

delicately done an' piled on, little by little, on the sly. Somethin' far more worthy of you, Shorty, than mere fisticuffs. An' while thinkin' so, on my word, I begun to grin in his face. It was just that thought, you see: that sooner or later I'd find the proper answer to that disorderly past remark, an' how surprised he'd be, after clean forgettin' it was ever due him.

"We were in Yokohama harbor then. Patrick, do you remember that night in the Isezak'-cho—Theaytre Street? "

Patrick, cap off, somewhat joss-like behind a cloud of smoke, nodded benignantly.

"An' do you remember that archery-booth beside the theayter trimmed in crimson streamers? How Double-Life Stubbs an' that crowd were inside, seein' the show, when the shootin'-booth man sicked his gang on you an' me? An' how Ol' Double-Life came tearin' an' rampin' forth, with reinforcements?"

"I remember that the shootin'-booth man, at least, was well wounded by his own weapons," said Patrick, with heavy satisfaction. "I did it myself."

"I saw the result. Where did you learn rapid-firin' with a bow, Patrick? "

"A bow! Would I bother wid such a thrashy

PICTURE-GALLERY GEORGE

ballistics? Pooh! He was gettin' away over a wall; so I chose a handful of arrows, and stabbed him where he vanished."

"*Our* get-away was the thing—with those wooden shoes sailin' into us like shells! I can hear 'em now, crackin' on Fatty Mullins's head. Ah—"

"'Twas a grand evenin'," Patrick assented. "I lost you early, though Shorty. Or did you go wid us to the dancin' up at Number Six? Gay doin's, but Harah spoiled it, pretendin' he was a circus horse, an' jumpin' through the paper walls into a room where a bunch o' Japs were pullin' off a weddin' dinner. There's somethin' lackin' in Harah."

"He 's no refinement," Shorty agreed. "No, I wasn't there. In the stampede out o' the Ise-zak'cho, I fell in with that George, or over him. He was wanderin' feebly about in rings, an' I took him in tow.

"You should 'a' laid eyes to him then, as I hoisted him through dark alleys, avoidin' pursuers. He was the last rose o' summer, gog-glin' an' droopin' an' wiltin' an' delib'rately usin' me for a sofa.

"'George,' says I, settin' down with him on the porch of a house to rest, 'this is bad business.

SHORTY AND PATRICK

There were black eyes handed round in the Isezak'cho, an' the Japs, you know, are not the Chinese. There'll be complaints an' heavy punishment. I can see Ol' Particular's cheeks bulgin' now; his private language 'll be a shinin' pattern for the ship at large. You an' I need alibis.'

"All the answer I got out o' George was a snore that rattled the porch. A small, sleepy Jap came out o' the house in dishabille—"

"Dishabille?" Patrick inquired. "You mean Motomachi?"

"Dishabille's no street, you big cow, it's a night-gown like. Though it *was* the Motomachi; for the Professor roosted thereabouts midst the native population. He heard us jawin' the sleepy Jap in English, no doubt, an' so nailed us.

"You see, while I was rousin' George, at the Jap's request, an' preparin' for further wanderin's, a voice said in my ear:

"'Jack, can you spare me the price of a bed an' a cup o' coffee? I used to be a fine young man, an' liked my fun; but now look at me, Jack, down an' out. There, that's a good fella!'

"It took me straight back to Fourteenth Street. I turned round, and saw a poor ol' guy from

PICTURE-GALLERY GEORGE

home, with white whiskers all over his face like he was hidin' in the Park. 'There's a fine, good, young fella, Jack,' he cries, wipin' his eyes with his hands. 'I was your kind once; easy come an' go, gay an' free. An' here I am now, all in, on the wrong side o' the world, an' never a chance o' seeing the ol' town again.'

" 'Why,' I says, cryin' myself, 'how dare you try to strong-arm me, you old crook?' An' I slipped him what I had left: four *yens*, I think, an' about a pound o' copper *cash*. We sat down together on the penny piazza.

"He told me that he was from New York; so I gave him the news: how the old places were closin' up under the Elevated, an' how the sailormen had all gone to Fourteenth Street. 'An' so even Rooney's place is clos'd,' he'd say. 'Ah, it's an ol' man I'm gettin' to be, when Rooney's is gone. It's time I was movin' myself.'

"When I made a break to get up, he grabbed me.

" 'Ain't there anythin' I can do for you, to remember me by?' he says.

" 'Why,' says I, 'I don't see what.'

" 'A little, full-rigged ship on your arm!' says he. 'A twist of anchors! A nice female figure! It's the only gift I've got left, an' I

SHORTY AND PATRICK

used to be a great tattooer, back on the Bowery. Professor McManus—that's me. But here there's nothin' doin'; the Japs have me beaten at my own game . . .'

"I sat as if froze there. I tried my voice two or three times before it sounded quite careless an' free.

" 'Why,' I said, then, 'there's nothin' that you can do for *me*, for I've got mine on already. But here's my friend. He's crazy about tattooin'. It's all I hear from him. He'll see a Jap tattooer's place, an' I have to fight him to keep him out of it. "No, George," I say, "you'll be sorry. Be patient; don't spoil yourself. What you want is a white man's work on *you*. I'm savin' *you* for an artist. An' George, he's waitin' for you, somewhere, with his needles. No fear, the lucky day 'll come for you." An', sure enough, Professor, here it is!'

" 'For that, Jack,' says the Prof. with feelin', 'your friend shall have the best I'm able. I'll get the needles off of a Jap at the end o' the street. We'll fix him there. When he comes around, how he will wring your hand!'

"Well, joy gave me stren'th; I packed George up the Motomachi like he was a pillow. The Prof. hobbled ahead, to wake the Jap,—an' a

PICTURE-GALLERY GEORGE

sore Jap he was. But we got in, an', for a wonder, with our shoes on.

"It was a queer place inside, when we made a light, to judge from the black, shiny eyes peepin' through the screens. A lot o' pretty little kids in red peeked down the stairs, an' yelled, an' an old woman smacked 'em an' chased 'em back to bed.

" 'What is it?' I asked.

" 'Geisha school,' says the Prof. He looked turrible in the light. His eyes were pink. His white lilocks were brushed every which way, an' all smoked yallow round his mouth.

"But he took out one o' my *yens* an' threw it down like a king.

" 'Saké,' says he. 'Boilin' hot. It's a pernicious habit,' he says, winkin' at me, 'but just this once, hey? It's all right when you can stop any time, as I could, if I wished.'

"They mixed the little bowls o' colors, an' laid out the needles. An' George! What snores! It was like the lion's house in the menagerie, to hear him.

" 'See here,' I says, lookin' at the Jap, 'no native talent. The good ol' Bowery style. No oriental art in this.'

" 'Oh,' says the Prof., almost shocked. 'I

SHORTY AND PATRICK

wouldn't permit him—not one punch. Now then, what sort o' design?

"I thought a while.

" 'Well,' I says, at len'th, 'he's quite a guy with the girls, you know. Somethin' rather sporty?'

" 'A nice female figure?'

" 'Exquisite. But nothin' prim, now.'

" 'Oh, by no means! Where'll he have it?'

" 'Well, suppose we say laid over his chest? He's got a fine chest, has George,—it'll make a swell background. An' spread it, mind. Nothin' dinky. Ample's the word.'

" 'Jack,' says the ol' cuss, with water in his eyes, 'you hurt my pride. Leave it all to me.' Sayin' which, he has some *saké*, takes up the needles, an' clears away George's overshirt. Then, stickin' the tip of his tongue out o' one end of his mouth, he begins.

" 'Well, I couldn't stay. J just had to go off somewheres an' yell. So I thought I heard a friend outside, callin' my name.

" 'Don't stop the job,' I says. 'I'll be right back. Continue, Prof., continue without stint.'

"I tiptoed out an' left them. Will I ever forget it? The Jap sat outside the candlelight, sneerin' at the Prof. behind his hand; an' all

PICTURE-GALLERY GEORGE

the screen-cracks had eyes shinin' through them. It was a bit creepy at that . . .

"But outside I forgot it, thinkin' o' George, the double-faced, slanderin', naggin', note-wag-glin', never-disfigured fiancé! Yow! I beat it through the town, over the bridge, across the Concession, down the Bund, onto the landin', an' headfirst into the last lanch, just in time.

" 'You're full, Shorty,' says Coxswain Carrol, very severe, when I fell over him an' the wheel.

" 'I am,' says I, 'an' glad of it.' An' I sang *The Voyage o' Columbus* all the way out to the ship . . ."

Shorty stopped abruptly, to crane his neck from our alcove.

"Hi, what's that, in the hall out there! Ladies in short skirts? A guy with horns, in a mask?"

"A ball upstairs," said Patrick, without interest. "They've been beatin' the floor this half hour. A mask ball. What of it? You're tellin' a story."

"George, you know, was due aboard?" I hinted.

"Ah, yes. But not till next mornin'. He was rowed out then, about First Call, in a sampan, very pale an' debilitated. He was some nine

SHORTY AND PATRICK

hours over his liberty, an' Ol' Particular was tearin' mad at anythin'. He'd heard officially about the Isezak'cho, an' every sailorman ashore that day he was sure was in it. Consequently, that mornin', he lit on our George an' heaved all the extra duties on the ship at him, completin' the horror. But I'm ahead o' myself.

"George came aboard, you see, draggin' himself down the gun-deck. It was crammed with men; we were just in from scrubbin' canvas; the mess gear was down, an', through the hatch, the marine country was full of undershirts an' half-cleaned rifles. The mixture appeared to annoy our George.

" 'Hello,' says I, slappin' him on the back. 'Where were you last night?'

" 'How should I know?' says he. 'I wish you wouldn't slap me that way, Shorty, it makes my head ache.'

" 'I was lookin' for you everywhere,' I says.

" 'Were you, though?' says he. 'Phew! Ain't that smell o' breakfast disgustin'?'

"George's overshirt was loose at the neck. I says:

" 'Why, George! You ain't had yourself tattooed!'

"He made a dab at his throat.



“All over his chest was the saddest-lookin’ sketch I ever saw.”

PICTURE-GALLERY GEORGE

“‘Me?’ he rattled. ‘Where? Where?’

“‘An’, when he’d torn his shirt half off his back, there, all over his chest, was the saddest-lookin’ sketch I ever saw.

“‘It was a nice, female figure, out o’ the ol’ Black Crook, I should think. Vintage o’ ’70, when the Prof. was in his prime. She was up on one foot an’ as if kickin’ George in the chin with the other. No, she wasn’t prim, by any means,—but the work itself! Oh, oh, what drawin’!

“‘We sat George in a barber chair near by. When he saw himself in the glass, he actu’lly burst into tears.

“‘‘I’m ruined,’ he moaned. ‘Whatever’ got into me! I’ll never be the same again!’ The crowd was ten deep, an’ more comin’ all the time.

“‘‘Don’t take on so, George,’ I says soothin’ly. ‘Why, it’s a decoration.’

“‘‘Oh!’ says he, ‘a decoration! Heaven forgive you, Shorty, for sayin’ that!’

“‘I pushed out, hurt at havin’ my taste questioned. Safe on the other side o’ the gun-deck, I did a few light steps—quite Black Crookish—an’ stuck a friend’s head into the dish-washin’ machine.

SHORTY AND PATRICK

"Well, sir, from that day, George began to change. I noticed it in little things. First, I didn't have any more pale-blue letters waggled in my face. An' George in the shower-baths was always tryin' to hide the Black Crook lady: he quite dropped off his old game, as a *pose plastique*. He kept a little mirror in his ditty-box, an' he used to sneak off an' look at his embellishments in it . . . I learned several useful new words by listenin' attentively to George, at such times.

" 'It's turrible,' he said, one day, 'to think o' goin' through life shovin' a sketch like that in front o' you! If it was even somethin' else!'

" 'Well,' I said, 'then why not have it covered up with somethin' else? Somethin' to fit over it, somethin' artistic, really Japanese—a souvenir, eh? Go to a good Jap tattooer, an' tell him you want an *ichi-ban* picture laid over that. You won't regret it.'

" 'No?' says he, startin' up. 'You think I wouldn't? Could I truly get the miserable thing covered up that way? Shorty, I believe I could! You're all right, you are!' He was quite tickled.

"We were out o' Yokohama, an' coastin' for

PICTURE-GALLERY GEORGE

Kobe then. He could hardly wait to arrive there.

"At Kobe, he was in a perfect fever to get his liberty. When he went ashore, it was the grief o' my life that I couldn't go with him. I never put in a longer afternoon.

"He returned, towards evenin', lookin' like a guy fresh from swallowin' a hearty drink an' suspectin' too late that it's wood alcohol.

" 'Shorty,' says he, somewhat pale in the twilight along the gun-deck, 'I'm goin' to ask you to look at this.' He peeled. Patrick was on hand, for one.

"Say, as George stood there, I couldn't see him at all. The only thing that I saw was a red, blue an' green geisha, about a foot an' a half high, trailin' all over George. You can imagine, when I tell you her fancy hair-pins were ticklin' his neck, while her skirts finished off under his belt. Seein' it all at once, it dazed me.

" 'Well, well,' he snaps out. 'How about it?'

" 'Why, George,' I says, as though unwillingly, 'it's too big.'

" 'Holy Mackerel!' he howls, goin' up in the air. 'That's what I told him! Too big? It's life-size!'

" 'Oh, not quite,' I says, gently, reprovin'

SHORTY AND PATRICK

Harah an' Patrick here, with a glance, for laughin'. 'Not quite life-size. But it rather shocked me, you see, comin' on it suddenly; it's so awful prominent. If you were off the len'th o' the ship, that's all I could see o' you—that lady. An' I don't even think she's a geisha, George,—look at that sash tied in front. It's good you're no married man; it ud hardly do for one, would it?'

"'No?' says he in a little, weak voice, sittin' down on a box. 'You don't think so?'

"'I should hesitate,' I says. 'If I was goin' to get married, it's hardly that style o' picture I'd have punched into me. I'd select somethin' more—professional, somethin' more heroic.'

"'What would you have, Shorty?' he quavers, holdin' his head. 'Tell me true, Shorty, for at least you've sympathy, which some haven't'—with a look at Patrick an' Harah.

"'Well,' I says, quite cheerful an' optimistical, 'why not a naval battle?'

"'A naval battle!' says he. 'You're out o' your head!'

"'A naval battle's thrillin' an' appropriate,' I says. 'Moreover, the details can be as mixed as you like, an' none the wiser. You could almost, I think,' says I, eyin' him over like

PICTURE-GALLERY GEORGE

a doctor prescribin', 'have a naval battle yet, over that.'

"He gets up, gives me one look, an', draggin' his heels, takes his Jap lady away with him.

"Next mornin', George's tattooin' was the talk o' the ship. It was just gettin' painful, an' George, in consequence, very fretful, an' every one plaguin' him for a look. For ten cents American money I think George would 'a' chucked himself overboard.

"Says Patrick to me, next day:

" 'I believe he's gettin' a trifle nutty, Shorty. He acts very queer at times, goin' round mutterin'. He has a wild eye. You'd best cut it out.'

" 'Cut what out!' says I. 'What am I doin' now? *I* was done with Professor McManus. Did I make him go to that Kobe Jap? No; a donkey engine couldn't 'a' held him back. An' that's not all. When these picturesque guys get tinkerin' with themselves, they never let up. He'll go on of his own accord, now he's got the habit. Wait till we're at Nagasaki; you'll see.' We were out o' Kobe then, runnin' south.

"George got in the way o' huntin' me out to discuss the tattoo lady. 'It's havin' an effect on the ship, too,' he says. 'Billy Spratt—you know

SHORTY AND PATRICK

how religious he is—he asked me the other day if there wasn't some way o' tonin' it down an' makin' it less lifelike? He says he thinks it almost isn't just nice; it's nearly as if there were ladies concealed aboard—Heaven help us!

“‘Well,’ I says, kindly, ‘there’s always the naval battle, George.’

“Presently we came to Nagasaki, where George got his liberty. After seein’ him off for the beach, I said to Patrick:

“‘Ol’ George the Work-of-Art has gone ashore to do it again.’

“‘Shorty, enough is plenty. I can’t believe you ain’t a liar,’ says Patrick, with his customary delicacy.

“‘All right,’ I says. ‘If he hasn’t made a fresh show of himself by to-night, I’ll take you up to that Risin’ Sun tea-house, on the hill, an’ ruin your linin’s. Why, George couldn’t stop now, any more than you could stop usin’ tobacco. It’s a turrible habit, creepy to contemplate, ain’t it? Vanity does it. Get down an’ give thanks, Patrick, that you look like a horse.’

“That night I didn’t wait for George to hunt me. I found him on the gun-deck, sunk down on the sill o’ the office. He was quite peaked out. On seein’ me, he says, in a faint tone o’ voice:

PICTURE-GALLERY GEORGE

“ ‘I’ve had a heart-breakin’ day, Shorty.’

“ ‘What doin’?’ I asked him, in a jolly way.

“ ‘Can’t you guess?’ he said, as if he wanted to cry.

“ ‘Not been to more tattooers!’ I shouted, steppin’ back.

“ ‘Yes, Shorty, I have,’ he said. ‘I didn’t want to, but somehow I couldn’t keep away. It was dreadful, tryin’ not to do it; but it wasn’t any use. I couldn’t stand that incriminatin’ Jap figure a minute longer. I’ve had myself done over. At least, I’m not suggestive any more.’

“ ‘Let’s see,’ I says, an’, with my hand behind my back, motions to Patrick. He came over with Harah, an’ Quinn, an’ Licks—”

“Not forgettin’ Willie Spratt, the moral censor,” interrupted Patrick.

“An’ Spratt, yes, to give it tone. George balked at the crowd, at first. But finally, he pulled his overshirt up over his head. It wasn’t very light there.

“ ‘Well,’ I says, ‘you dude, since when have you been wearin’ that blue underwear?’

“ ‘That ain’t underwear,’ he answered, with his voice tremblin’, ‘that’s tattooin’.’

“ ‘Oh!’ groans the bunch, like one man, baggin’ at the knees.

SHORTY AND PATRICK

“George was tattooed solid, as if he had on a sleeveless shirt, with enough dragons an’ snakes an’ reptiles, tied into half-hitches an’ makin’ faces from bow-knots, to fit out a dozen delirium tremens. An’ this effect was shaded off on the arms, most artistic’lly, with little snakes, taperin’ down to caterpillar-size, an’, finally, just a bug here an’ there, to carry off the decoration. I never saw anythin’ like it, anywheres, not even on an ol’-fashioned Jap fireman’s back.

“‘It took all five o’ those tattooers all day to do it,’ quavers George, from the office sill, where he’d sat down again in a heap. ‘I got scared when they began to exceed my orders, an’ tried to stop ’em. But they’d got that interested an’ worked up over it, that they wouldn’t take no for an answer. They kept swearin’ there’d be nothin’ else like it—”

“‘There isn’t,’ I says.

“‘It gives *me* the creeps,’ says Harah. ‘You look like a temperance lecturer’s picture of a drop o’ beer, magnified a thousand times. Excuse me if I go, George? I like a swallow now an’ then; I don’t want *my* appetite scared away.’

“He went, an’ the rest with him, unable to find words. I went too, for I was hurt to think how

PICTURE-GALLERY GEORGE

he'd chose snakes, when I'd been all for naval battles. So we left George alone, on the office sill, amongst his reptiles."

Shorty stopped.

"An' he never knew," added Patrick.

"Till long after," corrected Shorty. "But 'twasn't George that found it out then, I don't think. I've a suspicion some one else put him next to himself."

"Ah, yes; what about that girl?"

"How can you tell what they're goin' to do?" said Shorty, enigmatically. "He was makin' enough to keep a family, when I saw him. In Barnum's. On a platform. Photos, twenty-five cents, in a line along the front. You're on?"

"So, after all," concluded Patrick, "'twas Shorty set him up in his profession."

"An' how ungrateful; how, how— Pst! There, lookin' in at the door, in blue, with the little mask on!"

"From the ball upstairs, you coquette," drawled Patrick, lying back and feeling for a fresh cigar. To me:

"The pritty ones don't wear masks, do they?"

"No? Suppose," cried Shorty, beaming, as if with sudden inspiration, "suppose we patronize an' see?"

SHORTY AND PATRICK

Rashly, forgetting the early evening, I agreed. Directed by the waiter, we found, round the corner, a small, nocturnal shop-of-all-goods, where we procured three amazing noses. Behind these we went demurely to the ball. And there, Shorty, without previous introduction, won a Queen of Diamonds out of a hedge of frowning youths, all collars and cowlicks. And Patrick, from a whirling, spangled waltz, emerged escorting a bewildered Cleopatra, or some such siren, a queue of disgruntled rivals muttering at his heels. But these things must be irrelevant, touching on extraneous love and war (for war followed, in which two, blue clad, raged in the cloak room against heavy odds, like Ulysses and Telemachus among the Suitors). Afterwards, however, I noticed something that was relevant.

For into the street—while Shorty, the frequently-ejected, was taking stock of casualties there—the Queen of Diamonds emerged with her escort from the ball. Defying convention, she paused to say good-night to Shorty. And because she admired valor exhibited on her account, in the face of a chagrined cavalier, she tidied Shorty's neckerchief, brushed off his overshirt, and rolled down his sleeves. But, while

PICTURE - GALLERY GEORGE

rolling down his sleeves, she stopped to look intently at his arms.

"Well," she exclaimed, dropping his hands as if they were red-hot. "If I'd 'a' known you were a flirt, an' a jollier, an' all marked up with other girls' names, you wouldn't 'a' kissed me to-night behind any scenery. Here; take it back!"

Dexterously hurling it back at him, she dragged away her escort.

Shorty turned up to the lamplight a dazed countenance.

"Say, all over the world there's no two of 'em alike!"

V

THE BIG ONE

SHORTY and Patrick and I were marching, with the precision of a Macedonian phalanx, upon the Heart of Coney Island. Small boys, darting across our way, avoided us as pedestrians, for fear of being run over, shun the inflexible forefront of a marching regiment. Best girls, in transit from one aërial railway to another, brought their escorts to a halt and—gum-chewing suspended for the moment—feasted their eyes on my gallant companions. Patrick's impressive bulk drew out one juvenile "hooray!" and Shorty's impudence at least one secretly delivered smile. So, amid admiration both patriotic and amorous, we progressed grandly, bearing ourselves with the urbanity of persons perfectly self-satisfied.

Our eyes were dazzled by fiery architecture

THE BIG ONE

rising against the hot, black sky,—a garble of spangled domes and towers such as the Arabian Jinn must have evolved, between two days, for their astonished masters. From that glowing region of promise came, to greet us, on the tepid breeze, music from military to aboriginal, falsetto shrieks of terror experienced aloft and at full speed, the rattle of vast, airy machinery, detonations of powder-play, the clack of urgent voices promising every marvel.

Distinct amid this uproar was beaten out the cadence of a brass band:

“Boom! (rest) Boom! (rest) Boom! (a double rest) Boom! Boom!”

At that incentive, Shorty, half crouching, advanced nimbly, with a shuffle of heels. His lips puckered, his face wearing a look of great severity, he whistled windily a jaunty fragment somehow familiar. Tall Patrick, for a wonder, caught the tune and joined in it, with an excessive exercise of flats and sharps. Remembering more accurately with every step, from whistling they came to singing snatches, such as:

“Boom; Ha, ha! Boom; Ha, ha!”

Then, suddenly, we all recalled it. And, in our exultation throwing shame to the winds, we arrived before the Heart of Coney Island,

SHORTY AND PATRICK

locked abreast and singing for all who chose to hear:

“Tra, la, la, la, la,
La-la-la! La! La!
Voilà les Anglais,
Boum! Ha!
Boum! Ha, ha, ha!”

We were settled, finally, at table, aloft upon a glittering balcony. Below us, in a circus ring hanging over a lagoon and spattered by grotesque fountains, gay equestrians succeeded performing polar bears and were succeeded by vivid acrobats.

“Shorty, that little French song,—I’ve been wondering where you could have got it. It sounds like Paris.”

“That?” from Shorty, between licks along a half-rolled cigarette. “That was Nice, I think, last Mediterranean cruise. Aha! I remember now! It was in a theayter on—what’s that Rue, in Nice, all dressed with little chairs an’ tables?”

“Rue Massena?”

“Imagine his knowin’, now! Yep, in a theayter on Rue Massena. A very trashy, unsubstantial little theayter. D’you remember, Pat-

THE BIG ONE

rick, how that box-office just li'rally came apart in the Big One's hands? "

"It's a story, then? "

"What!" cried Shorty, shrilly. "We've not told you that—about the Big One?"

Forthwith we all slid further into comfort, struck matches, and rapped on the table. And finally, Shorty, his sly young face glimmering at recollection, said:

"There were four to our little party: the Admiral's flagship, two small protected cruisers, an' us. We came from Naples to Villefranche, just movin', so that the Admiral could get his stummick properly over the Italian hospitality an' fit to go up against the French. Poor ol' man, the anchors weren't hardly over before some one in Nice up an' slung a banquet at him. He wobbled, but he came back game at that: the same night he fell for it like a hero, takin' all the captains with him, out o' spite. As his barge passed our ship, goin' in, the gun-deck quartet was singin' very soft:

" 'Good-bye, my liver;
Good-bye, my liver;
Good-bye, my liv-e-er! (hold it)
I'm goin' to ruin you now!'

SHORTY AND PATRICK

"Or so I'm told; for just then Patrick an' I were otherwise engaged. We were in Nice, a short trolley ride, as you know, from Villefranche, with some two hundred liberty men from all ships, under strict orders to smile continu'ly an' be back, mind you, on the stroke o' one bell—half-past eight—that evenin'—"

"An', about one bell that evenin'—"

"You've skipped a lot there," I interrupted, reprovingly.

"Of course I have. What interest are the preliminaries alongside the finished product? I'm passin' over the usual, uninterestin' part, to show you Patrick an' me as we were at one bell—a couple o' highly-finished products."

"Speak for yourself then," Patrick said, severely. "I was no more than feelin' comfortable."

"Comfortable! How so, with no skin on your nose? "

"I was peelin' from sunburn, you shrimp, an' it's well you know it." *

"You were sunburnt, I know, an' well peeled, I know. But not peeled from sunburn, Patrick, for little Shorty saw that done. You'll deny, I suppose, when you heard that sweet singin' down that little street, puttin' your murderin' two hun-

THE BIG ONE

dred pounds up on my shoulders, an' stickin' your impudent red head into that window, an' gettin' that plate broke across your face—"

"Shorty, you've had enough to-night, I'm thinkin'," said Patrick, nodding with simple dignity.

"Oh, well, I won't pursue. To resume:

"About one bell, then, just when we should 'a' been bendin' our minds dutifully on the trolley car an' the lanch, observe us skatin' down that Rue of open-face cafés, arm in arm with a perfect stranger who was beggin' us in English to call him Percy.

"*'You must call me Percy,'* I remember him sayin', 'or I shall be cross with you. An' you must talk to me continu'llly; it's like a whiff o' little ol' New York to hear you. Dear little ol' New York!' he howls out, in a tremblin' voice, stoppin' an' gettin' quite a crowd about us. 'Dear little ol' burg, that I ran away from in my folly! How you boys bring it back to me! Oh, speak again,' says he, claspin' his two hands, like an actor on the stage. 'I could cry just listenin'.' An' to prove it, he did.

"I can't exactly figure out where we'd collected that one . . . but he was a bird, for fair. All poisoned up in a white flannel suit an' a

SHORTY AND PATRICK

straw hat with a ribbon to it that looked like a string o' new signal flags. That searchlight on his finger, Patrick! A big cake of ice was broke, all right, when that ring was hoisted together. *I* saw that he was the genuine goods; but Patrick, gettin' the flash o' that ring in his eye, had his doubts if it was come by honestly.

"'What did you run away from in New York?' he asked the dressy guy, insinuatn'ly.

"'From work, Horace, if you'll pardon me callin' you so,' says the guy, leanin' up against Patrick very confidentially. 'From a cruel parent,' he says, 'who threatened me with work. Excuse me, madam,' he says, knockin' a tableful o' drinks on the sidewalk an' bowin' to a waiter in a white apron. 'My mistake,' he says, skinnin' some o' that white French money off a roll as big as your arm. 'Go buy yourself a trousseau an' a bridal suite.'

"The ship at half-past eight? What a chance!

"Presently the three of us wandered up in front of a little theayter all stuck over with lights. 'Oh, goody!' says this Percy, clappin' eyes on it. 'How passionately I love the drama! We must take this in,' he says, 'without delay.' The next I knew, we were all up against the

THE BIG ONE

stage in a private box, an' a waiter was strainin' his back over three bottles of—"

Shorty's voice was properly impressive as he uttered that word to conjure with in certain social strata:

"—wine!

"That theayter! Innumerable French, dip-pin' into beers an' little glasses full o' cherries. Smoke everywhere to make it homelike. Down in the orchestra I saw Jack Stubbs an' a friend from the Flagship gapin' up at us, as if we were so many dooks. I think Percy thought he was, at that.

"For instance, after that 'Boom, ha, ha!' song . . .

"She was a swell singer, the girl that sang it; she was got up in the best part of a dress, an' every time she shrugged her shoulders Patrick jumped an' cried: 'Look out!' When the song was done, while all the French were yellin' '*Beese! Beese!*' an' nearly tearin' the seats apart, this Percy, pouncin' on a waiter, says:

" 'Horace, if you'll pardon me callin' you so,' he says, skinnin' the roll again with quiverin' fingers, 'hop out with this an' buy the lady a thousand red, red roses, an' see that they're perfectly fresh, an' that's what I think o' *her*,' he

SHORTY AND PATRICK

says. It was plain that he didn't much care what happened to father's money, that young man.

"'Twas after her, I think, they hung out a new sign, an' on the sign we read:

"'M'soo Pol Patout.'"

At that point, Patrick, abruptly altering his pose, made ready, I suspected, to kick Shorty under the table. But he changed his mind; for, smiling a little ruefully, he lay back with closed eyes, eloquently though mutely expressing resignation.

Searching my memory, I repeated:

"Patout—Patout—Not the *savate* fellow—the fighter?"

"Don't tell me you've seen him!"

"He was beaten for the championship of France last year in Paris—"

"A lumpy, hard-lookin' duck in a skin-tight bathin' suit, like? But the face on him! When he marched out to music Patrick had to hide, from laughin'."

"His real face, at that," from Patrick, opening one eye. "His head clipped naked all over . . . but I think it was the whiskers did it. Faith, the way he was mutilated, he looked as if he'd fallen asleep in the barber chair, an' when he

THE BIG ONE

woke up they'd got scared an' hid the glass on him."

"Oh," Shorty remonstrated. "But the other one!

"After him, out steps a little, small valentine in a dress-suit, an' a bran' new, more turrible class o' whiskers yet. The poor homely fella—no one had the heart to laugh at *him*. I was sick with shame for him. I could 'a' killed *his* barber for him with relish.

"This poor little sketch lined up with M'soo Patout an', puttin' one hand up on his shoulder, got off a speech to the crowd, in French. Percy translatin', it ran like this:

" 'There was a match on between M'soo Patout an' another party, but it's off. The other party has changed his mind. The match goes to M'soo Patout, without a gesture, together with the purse, which is five hundred francs. But, as an earnest o' good faith, so, that no one's pleasure will be spoiled, M'soo Patout stands willin' to put up the five hundred francs here an' now, if any one can find, anywheres, a gent to fill the vacant corner. All welcome, none barred. Who wins takes the money.' Nothin' if not handsome, hey?

"At that point, Patrick, here, uncoils himself

SHORTY AND PATRICK

very delib'rately, an' sits up. 'Takin' tight hold o' Percy, he says: 'It can't be possible.' He looks over at M'soo Patout, an' begins breathin' hard. 'Percy,' he says, 'how much is five hundred francs, real money? Is it not a hundred dollars? Is it not equal, in bald language, to the staggerin' sum o' two thousand beers? You should not 'a' brought me into this place,' says Patrick, peelin' his overshirt, an' throwin' it on the floor. 'This is no place,' he says, gettin' a leg over the edge o' the box, 'for an Irishman, with pay drawn and spent.' By that time, he was standin' up on the stage, feelin' his knuckles an' smilin' invitin'ly at M'soo Patout."

"Patrick?"

"Fairly straight, for him," replied that sandy giant, grudgingly. "What else would I do, at that time o' night, havin' it waved in my face that way? No one stopped me."

"The best heavy-weight on the ship? Not likely," cried Shorty. "I didn't use up any efforts stoppin' *him*. Lookin' at Patout, I didn't have but one fear. To Percy, who was sittin' back just dazed with delight, I says:

"'Percy,' I says, earnestly, 'if you know the words, tell your bare French friend to make over the money an' beat it while his shoes are

THE BIG ONE

good. I'm afraid we'll all be pinched for manslaughter.'

"'Me stop it?' cries Percy, with tears o' joy sparklin' in his eyes. 'Not for all papa's got!'"

After a pause, Shorty continued, thoughtfully:

"Will you pardon me if I seem to skip some, here? For instance, where Percy, up on the edge o' the box, arrangin' our end, says to Patrick: 'Horace, is it agreeable to you that you both use the ring rules of your respective countries?' An' where Patrick, wrestlin' with the gloves, answers: 'Rules? Ha, ha!' so bold an' gay. An' where that miserable little dress-suit guy says: '*Ally,*' an' steps back . . ."

"Go on," said Patrick, grimly. "Why stop now?"

"Well," continued Shorty, "what happened I didn't rightly see, an' I'm pretty quick, at that. I *did* see Patrick hoist back his right, for a swing. But it seemed to me, somehow, that just then M'soo Patout was standin' on his hands. An', immediately followin' that, a turrible crash o' breakin' fiddles . . . It was Patrick, slingin' himself, upside down, over the footlights an' in amongst the band.

"Back in the box, his first words were:

SHORTY AND PATRICK

"'Where are we now? Are we out safe?'

"An' then, gettin' his bearin's, he cries, in a heart-breakin' voice:

"'The murderer! He kicked me with his feet!' An' would you believe it, that's just what M'soo Patout had done. His idea o' fightin'!"

"Of course; the *savate*."

"My little name for him was worse, an' longer by a couple o' joints. Mad? I was half on the stage, with a bottle, before that Percy grabbed me back.

"'Leave go o' me,' I says. 'What rules are these?' I says. 'My friend never signed to go up against a mule,' I says. 'Leave me at that Spikidie with this; it seems a very free sort o' place here; I guess bottles ain't barred,' I says, 'any more than feet.'

"But Percy: well, if I was cross, so was he, but in another way. He jumped up on the edge o' the box an' faced that mob, all lyin' back, roarin' at us with laughter.

"Just his bright-red, blazin' face stopped 'em. Balancin' on the edge o' the box, he took that fat roll out of his pocket an' skinned it down till he'd counted it. Then, shakin' it at them, he roared out, in the French language:

THE BIG ONE

“‘In the words of our first commander, John Paul Jones, ‘we have not yet begun to fight! Five thousand francs to any one, if I do not find, before midnight to-night, an American sailorman to make M’soo Patout look like what the cat dragged in!’

“For a minute they sat still. Then the air was full o’ handkerchiefs.

“‘Percy,’ I says, slingin’ my arm round his neck, ‘rash you may be, but if you lose, I can see it go willin’ly after this moment!’ Says he, slappin’ his vest an’ takin’ my hand:

“‘Horace,’ he says, ‘if you’ll pardon me callin’ you so, we will *not* lose it. The Navy,’ says he, ‘stands betwixt it an’ them.’ We didn’t need anythin’ more, we two, but a little red fire, an’ a brass-band playin’ ‘Oh, Say!’ an’ a picture of Admiral Dewey thrown on the curtains behind us.

“Jack Stubbs an’ his Flagship friend, not quite understandin’, came bouncin’ through the French and did a wall-scalin’ drill into the box, to be at hand if it came to the worst. Between the bunch of us, we worked Patrick out to the lobby. An’ on the street, we ran slam into the arms o’ some twenty boys from all ships, hesitatin’ about the door, peekin’ in, an’ wonderin’

SHORTY AND PATRICK

if there wasn't need for 'em inside. There's instinct for you!

"When they'd heard, perhaps they weren't for quick action!

" 'There's two dozen here,' bawls out a red-eyed carpenter's mate off the Flagship. 'There's enough here,' he says, wavin' his arms in the air, 'to lay this place in sickenin' ruins!' The half of 'em were for that in a minute. It's lucky there was a middle-aged bos'n there, stone-cold, to hold 'em back. An' Percy. It was Percy that finally straightened it out.

" 'Friends all,' says he, gettin' 'em round him. 'Look at this right. That M'soo Patout in there must perish, but he must perish legitimately,' he says. 'We have three good hours yet till twelve,' he says, draggin' out a gold watch that looked like a ginger-snap, both sides stickin' together, an' where the guts of it were, search me. 'Three hours? What!' says he, warming up to his subject, 'in three hours can we not find an executioner for him, kill him, bury him, have his tombstone carved an' up, an' grass an' flowers flourishin' on his grave?'

" 'We can,' they howls, 'an' will!' An' we went surgin' up the middle o' the Rue Massena, wavin' an' arguin' an' near comin' to blows over

THE BIG ONE

who it should be. Along the sidewalks, on each side, trampled a mob like the fringe of a parade. We jammed the traffic where we marched. Horses took to the side-streets at the mere sight of us.

"From followin' up this clue an' that, finally, in a little café—what's that open place all full o' trolley cars? Oh, yeh; Place Massena—we routed out a fella named Olsen. He was a big, fierce barrel of a sailorman off the Flagship, who looked as if he could digest a M'soo Patout every mornin' for his breakfast. We told him all. Says he, with a pityin' look:

" 'Is he waitin' there now?'

"We told him yes.

" 'Leave me at him,' he says, an' starts off walkin' back so fast the most of us had to trot to keep up with him.

"On the way, we ran into Jack Stubbs an' his friend, whom we'd lost. He was towin' somethin' he'd found: a tremendous, black coon off the protected cruiser *Leadville*. That Shine, he had a back like a W. T. compartment door, an' hands like two bunches o' red bananas. They hung down an' flapped against his knees. Just lookin' at him made me overjoyed that there

SHORTY AND PATRICK

wasn't even a bowin' acquaintance, between him an' me, to get strained.

"When Stubbs saw us, he sat up a yell an' shoved this vision into us.

" 'Well, fellas,' he says, almost hysterical, 'here's Mister Black wants to join.'

" 'In line with you, Mister Black,' says Percy, slappin' him on the back, an' then lookin' at his hand, quite astonished, as if he'd smacked it up against a fence. 'Mister Olsen first, Mister Black second, who next?'

" 'I beg pardon,' says Patrick, here, 'but I must seem to crowd myself into first place, owing that Frenchman something unusual. Not to be impolite,' he says, 'but the one disputes my right, I can w'ale the livin' soul out of him here an' now,' he says.

" 'Would you believe it, almost before that theayter we found still another? His name was Ignatius McConnelly O'Hara—also a Flagship product—an' he came drivin' by to song, lyin' back in an open hack, with his feet up alongside the driver. When he got out, take my oath, I think he could almost 'a' stepped over the horse. We told him about it. He peers at the theayter, hands his money an' pipe to a friend without a word, an' in we go."

THE BIG ONE

Shorty, pausing again, made some wet rings on the table with his glass.

"If you don't mind," he said, "I'll again draw somethin' of a veil . . .

"It took, in all, thirty-five minutes, countin' preliminaries an' intermissions, which took thirty. It was just pitiful, an' that's the fact. Patrick an' the big Swede were able to walk away, with assistance. The Dark Cloud was carried. Ignatius McConnelly O'Hara—they tell me the Flagship's bull surgeon made quite a fella out of him, in time . . .

"We scarcely heard the cheerin', or saw the French tearin' each other's neckerchiefs for joy as we passed through 'em. We stood on the sidewalk, huddled up like sheep, starin' at one another, an' saying nothin'. Finally, some one sent the wounded to the trolley cars an' towed the rest of us into side-streets, away from the grins. Comin' on a little, lonesome café there, we went in.

"Will I ever forget that picture? Twenty sailormen scrouched down in twenty iron chairs. An' Patrick, lyin' out on a marble table, with a cold towel fitted over his nose. An' Percy, sittin' up on another table, with his head tipped, lookin' into the air, more than

SHORTY AND PATRICK

interested, as if he saw his five thousand francs just fadin' two points off the end of his cigarette.

"The conversation, too. So spirited! Some one would say, as if at a wake:

" 'Well, they were the best the Fleet afforded.' Then we'd have ten minutes slow breathin'. Then some one would add:

" 'An' a Frenchman! Which makes us look good, I suppose, up an' down the Mediterranean, with two thousand British sailormen at Malta, an' a British army at Gib.' After considerin' that for ten minutes, the Flagship carpenter's mate, clearin' his throat, remarks:

" 'Fellas, with your permission I'll cuss a little, we bein' all friends here.' He did so. It helped some, but only temporarily.

"Presently Percy speaks up.

" 'Boys,' he says, 'I won't believe that it's over yet. Think of another name.'

" 'Why, Jim Jeffries,' says someone, with a sickly laugh.

" 'No need goin' outside the Service on that course,' says I, not thinkin'. 'Tom Whalen, back in New York, was a sailorman once.'

"Next thing I knew, Percy was on his feet, starin' at me.

THE BIG ONE

“‘Horace,’ he whispers, ‘speak that name again!’

“‘Not know Tom Whalen!’ I says, misunderstandin’. ‘Ain’t ever read the sportin’ page? Never in Whalen’s place, on Fourteenth Street, an’ you a New Yorker—’

“Percy snatched out his watch.

“‘Ten thirty, now,’ says he, ‘an’ the bet holds good till midnight. Mates,’ he cries, ‘we’ll do it yet. I’m off! But never fail to meet me,’ he says, ‘in front o’ that theayter at five minutes to twelve. You two I want,’ says he, snatchin’ at me an’ Patrick. An’ he drags us after him, out through the door. Next I knew, the three of us, all out o’ breath, were in a barouche, behind a horse runnin’ away up Rue Massena.

“‘The rest comes foggy,” continued Shorty, after a moment’s thought, “like pictures on a screen. Sometimes I’d think I dreamt it,—if it wasn’t for Patrick here . . .

“‘There was one bit, where we fell out o’ that barouche beside a big, whitish hotel all dressed with lights an’ palm trees. An’ people runnin’ here an’ there in the dark. An’ Percy shakin’ first one an’ then another, yellin’:

SHORTY AND PATRICK

“‘My car! My car! My driver! My driver!’

“‘Crazy in the head,’ says I, taggin’ close after him, expectin’ every minute to catch him frothin’.

“Presently, he grabs hold of a little chauffeur all got up in leather.

“‘Where’s the car!’ he yells in this little guy’s ear, shakin’ him somethin’ turrible. ‘Don’t tell me that it’s apart again, an’ you with a widowed mother to support at home! After it quick, if you plan on livin’ a minute!’

“Next picture—

“‘The four of us, in a great, fat, screechin’ automobile, leavin’ the town, chasin’ a searchlight path, among trees an’ fences that slung ’emselves at us out o’ the dark in a way to make your stummick crawl.

“‘The Saints look down!’ I heard Patrick murmurin’ to himself, as he sat beside me. ‘We’re all dead men. Where to,—that is, before the flag-draped funeral gratin?’

“‘To Monte Carlo!’ sings out Percy from the front seat. ‘Oh, boys!’ he cries, ‘don’t you know that Thomas Whalen himself half broke the bank there yesterday?’

“At last, I tumbled. Till then, I’d just ad-

THE BIG ONE

mired Percy's money; but right there I got stuck on Percy for himself.

"However, that one trip'll do me; I'm willin' to call it my whole automobile career. I'm not particular to tune any harps just yet, but give me for mine a torpedo boat ridin' a winter blow in mid-Atlantic, with the engines broke, an' everythin' cut loose an' thrashin' about, an' the next ship over the skyline. I'll take my chance on her, but never again with Percy an' his careless-cart. Next day I picked out three gray hairs. An' when I sneaked up behind Patrick on the gun-deck, an' just casu'llly said: 'Honk! Honk!' he turned like a flash, with a shout o' fright, an' chased me upside down into the office. Yep. Once behind Percy satisfied us, all right.

"I'm no guide-book, so if the streaks I saw that night were scenery, let 'em go undescribed. We never noticed a town till we were through it,—an' three we split up the back that I know of. Then, at last, we came curvin' round beside the sea, toward a swath o' lights spread out ahead like a dressed fleet at Oyster Bay. It was Monte Carlo. So, picture three—

"We stopped that machine before a peach of

SHORTY AND PATRICK

a place. Gardens, fountains, statuary, lights winkin', music playin' smooth an' soft—"

"The Casino!"

"Take the money. The Casino it was. Percy had dove inside, the moment we'd slowed down. An' I saw a lighted clock. It was eleven-three!

"After hours, it seemed like, we caught sight of him, leadin' some one out—a youman house, crowdin' the door, pushin' his chest a foot in front of him. That moment! It was Whalen. It was the Big One.

"Comin' down the steps, the Big One says, almost fretfully:

" 'I take it unkindly,' he says. 'I was winnin' big. I was tearin' the bank apart. My very seat at the table was worth five hundred francs. An' here you come, snatchin' the bread out o' my mouth.'

" 'Thomas,' says Percy, leanin' on him implorin'ly, 'that Frenchman has licked our Fleet. Four fine, big boys we put up against him, an', takin' 'em one by one, he kicked the stuffin' out of 'em. All Nice is laughin' at the Navy, Thomas. How will we go back an' tell it to the girls at home, on Fourteenth Street, amongst the artificial palms?' "

THE BIG ONE

"Ah!" Patrick interjected, "the gifted tongue he had, wid that one touch!"

Said Shorty:

"The Big One hangs tremblin'. Then:

" 'Give room, there!' he shouts, climbs aboard, an' drives himself in between us. 'Hit it up!' he calls down the little chauffeur's neck. An'—*brrrupp!*—off we go from a standstill, home-bound, with a roar like the quick-fire guns breakin' loose . . .

"An' when, lacking just three minutes o' midnight, we slid to a stop before that theayter!

"We'd made a necessary little toilet on the way: the Big One had on Patrick's uniform, while Patrick, in exchange, had on some o' the Big One's, to keep him in countenance. At that—an' this lad's no shrimp, you know—the Big One had split Patrick's overshirt across the shoulders: so that his chest, with the full-rigged ship tattooed, sticks out, for all to see. An' that same full-rigged ship was the first thing our boys on the sidewalk recognized, when we piled out. By that alone they knew; they didn't have to see his face; an' I think the yell must 'a' been heard on board.

"The house was packed; we could hardly get him down in front. We saw him climb up on

SHORTY AND PATRICK

the stage, rubbin' his arms, like ol' times. M'soo Patout came out for the last go, to earn his roll, smilin' an' blazay, as much as to say: '*Must* I go through with this foolishness again?' . . .

"The little, whiskery guy, just as before, grins, an' says, '*Ally!*' an' steps back.

"M'soo Patout advances in a deathly silence. He makes a bluff with one hand. Then, all of a sudden, he kicks the Big One a murderin' blow up in the jaw.

"The Big One almost cracked a laugh. Never puttin' up his arms at all, he stands lookin' at M'soo Patout as if he was a curiosity. Then he says, kind o' tickled—every one heard him: you could 'a' heard a fly eatin' his dinner:

" 'Well,' he says, musin'ly, 'you cute son-of-a-gun!'

"M'soo Patout looks vexed. Quick as a flash, droppin' on his hands, he lands two more with his feet: one in the ribs an' one on the belt. The Big One just jarred a little,—oh, scarcely noticeable. But he stopped lookin' pleasant.

"An' then, as M'soo Patout was risin', prob'ly with the intention o' viewin' the body an' takin' the applause, some one just naturally turned out the lights on him. There was a very



“He never hesitated there to pick anythin’ for his button-hole.
He went right on through.”

THE BIG ONE

pretty back-scene to that stage: a mossy dell, if I remember. M'soo Patout never hesitated there to pick anythin' for his buttonhole. He went right on through.

"An', to tell the truth, what with the excitement, an' the noise, an' the dust that followed, I forget the rest.

"Except comin' up the port ladder at daylight, very cautious, like a tightrope walker, with Percy's white flannel coat on, an' my overshirt pocket full o' champagne corks, an' wearin' a brown derby hat sumptuously marked inside, in gold letters: 'T. W.'

"Which stands for 'Thomas Whalen,' don't it, from Nice to Fourteenth Street, Manhattan?"

VI

THE MYSTERIOUS HOURIS

INTO the silence was thrust the clatter of the telephone bell. Delusions of place and time, thoughts in forming, were shattered by that sound. Noises of other, actual things, as if set going by this one, crowded in: exhaust of steam and clash of coupling freight cars far below my open windows, the thud of evening traffic beyond them on the water, all the countless, muffled rumors of the city's upper riverside at night. Then, with these sounds for an accompaniment, across some miles of looped wire sang a small, clear voice:

"Is it you? Good landfall! I took a chance, you see. It's me, you know—Patrick."

"Patrick!" At that name, long unheard, at once I felt the imminence of unusual associations, delightfully jovial and salty, restored

THE MYSTERIOUS HOURS

from oversea and containing I could guess what treasures of strange experience. And no doubt my pleasure was apparent in my exclamation, for that voice became suddenly embarrassed in its tone, as if its owner felt and did not know what to do with some unexpected compliment.

"Ah, now—we're barely in; that is, I am. An' seein' I'm just after happenin' on Shorty here—"

"Shorty? You'd lost him then?"

"Ah, I'd forgot you hadn't heard—or seen. Yes, I've found him. But I'm not quite used to him as yet. I could near cry, just lookin' at him."

"He's not been laid up!"

"No, not that. Nor yet what else you're prob'ly thinkin' now. But— Where can I show him to you?"

"Can you come here?"

"What's that? This squeegee band in this place makes so much— Ah! Well, now, if you wish . . ."

"Get out at the express station and walk west till you come to a parapet across the end of the street. It's the last house, next to the river. How soon?"

"You'll see. Express station, parapet—cut it

SHORTY AND PATRICK

out now, you; nothin' o' your looks 'll talk to him on my five cents!"

The wires clicked and were silent, leaving me, on one good friend's account, uneasy. So, with relief I heard, scarcely half an hour later, the elevator gate outside my door clash shut. Immediately Patrick's blue shoulders filled the entry.

Big, homely, and smiling, ruddy, sandy, and neat in liberty blue, Patrick at least was the unimpaired duplicate of my familiar mental picture of him. Therefore, even while I caught his hand, my eyes, satisfied with him, turned past his face, searching for Shorty and his ailment. For a moment, I did not know him.

In that figure, vivid beneath the entry light, there was, at first glance, nothing of the jaunty sailorman whom I had known. A derby hat sat on his head; stiff worsted, casually fitted, disfigured his well-set body; a shiny collar and a too-festive cravat strangled his brown neck. He was, indeed, all strange except his face, which, at my stare, turned confused and then defiant.

The three of us in chairs, tobacco jars open and glasses near, I asked:

"So you went back on the Service?"

"Out three months," he said, abruptly.

THE MYSTERIOUS HOURS

"Why?"

"I was in eight years," he cried, his voice going suddenly flat and loud. "Eight years, mind you, first under the lid of a stew-pan of a monitor, then wearin' out linoleum with these feet up an' down the *Oklahoma* gun-deck. That's nothin', I suppose? Eight years o' buckets an' brass-rags an' scrubbin'-brushes, Shorty here an' Shorty there, jump to the pipe an' be hanged to you! Have me spend my life at it? Oh, sure; oh, certainly; in a minute!"

"What's *your* term, Patrick?" I asked.

"Third," replied that one steadily. "Goin' on ten years. *I* saw the ship when she was bare red steel all over . . . an' myself a kid that could hardly keep the bells straight in my head, or lock a breech in quick practise to suit a chief gunner's mate—much less thinkin' I'd ever be one myself. Which I will, come November. Ten years! But for that, I'm not so sick of her she ain't got to go some, down *or* up— That is— Ha! *That's* hot air, hey? I hope I ain't made a show o' myself?"

"Don't worry. Shorty, what plans have you?"

"Steel shop. Joinin' the union next week. I was beginnin' there before I shipped. There's good money—"

SHORTY AND PATRICK

Encountering Patrick's calm stare, he stopped, fished hurriedly in his pockets for tobacco, made, in his uneasiness, a travesty of his usual faultless cigarette. Then I saw, on the congested little finger of his left hand, a narrow ring set with a blue stone—a ring such as young girls wear. Patrick's glance caught mine. For a moment, then, I read in that honest Irish face dumb wonder, perhaps dumb grief: a mute comment on the infirmity of friendship in such a case as this.

That there was nothing but discomfort for us all in further attention to this phenomenon, Patrick and I, by look, observed together. So we began to talk at large, with speech which flagged sadly for a while. But presently, with Shorty as silent as if he were the outsider that he looked, we drifted from talk of land and sea at large to sea-talk in particular, swung from impersonal affairs to personal, and, narrowing always toward one subject, at last inevitably reached the *Oklahoma*.

From Patrick I heard then all the past months' news. I learned the intimate bits of a tropical, correctory voyage; a rifle and bayonet season, of camps in stone plazas, and sentry duty under rustling, barred windows. And besides

THE MYSTERIOUS HOURS

these bits, thrust through the daily monotony of work which almost did itself from habit, were rare breaks. I heard how, in the Banks fog, when the Bridge had mixed the siren signals of her consorts just a minute, fear had frozen the great battleship. And there, unconscious of his achievement, Patrick, with a few words, raised up that scene for me all vivid: the keen bow of a misdirected cruiser flashing out from the mist, hanging for a moment overhead, then passing by, scraping and splintering, astern. I heard of a duel disguised as sport; a glove-fight, on the foc's'l deck, that ended, in its last round, a feud of long standing begun romantically as far away as Yokohama Bund. And there were other, lighter subjects. There had been a barber's boycott on the gun-deck, with hilarious details. There had been a Quartermaster with an oversweet shore smile. The material, it seemed, was endless. Patrick was finishing with the Quartermaster:

"You see, one thing he should 'a' kept in mind for his best good: mashers ain't encouraged so horribly effusive in those thropical parts. There's usually a jumpy, short-tempered relation to the lady holdin' up a wall just round the corner, an' all you've got to do is wink to find out if

SHORTY AND PATRICK

you ain't his pincushion. For me, I look on the map where I am, nowadays, before I let my face slip on the beach."

"True Oriental caution! Were you ever—you must have been—in a Mohammedan city? Of course! There's Tangier—"

"Tangier?" Shorty sat up.

"Tangier?" repeated Patrick slowly, ignoring Shorty's glance. "I don't just remember—"

"What! You're losin' your mind!" snapped Shorty. "Don't remember that evenin' in Tangier with the French Ambassadd?"

"Ah. * I'm gettin' somethin' of it now. Let's see. . . . He won't have heard that one? I wonder if I could go through wid it properly?"

"You!" from Shorty, snatching up tobacco and cigarette papers. "You leave that alone. That's a good one, which I ain't goin' to see slaughtered. I'll tell it myself, if told it must be; then I'm not afraid we'll get it shoved at us butt end foremost, with the introduction trailin' in last, pretendin' to be the point—"

Lighting his cigarette, he did not see the triumphant smile that Patrick flashed at me. Shorty, at last beguiled and all unconscious of it, slid down in his chair and presently, his

THE MYSTERIOUS HOURS

features softened and made vaguely mischievous by reminiscence, so began:

"Omittin' everythin' unnecessary, I'll commence with Patrick an' me playin' pool under the Hotel Continental, in Tangier, early of an evenin'.

"There was a young guy in a tourist suit, from Kalamazoo, settin' up on the spectator's platform, poisonin' the air with those Spikidie cigarettes they get foreigners to fall for in Gibraltar. He was tellin' us what we were missin' by stayin' in a billiard-parlor when we might be enjoyin' Oriental scenery up an' down Tangier.

" 'This ain't the way to see the world,' he says. 'Squanderin' the precious hours lollin' across a pool-table!'

" 'Why,' I says, lookin' up at him over a drink like I was about four years old, 'what is there to see hereabouts, in particular?'

" 'Heavens!' he says. 'Heavens! How benighted! You've missed the Call to Prayers,' he says, 'but there's still an' evenin' service in the mosque, an' there's always that café where you can see the natives drinkin' tea.'

"Say, lookin' at that guy, I was sorry for him; the poor fella was just half alive. The evenin'

SHORTY AND PATRICK

service an' the natives drinkin' tea! Says I to him, pityin'ly:

"'Claude,' I says, 'attend to me now, while I tell you somethin'. What you're talkin' of ain't scenery. You've got the wrong word. A native drinkin' tea ain't scenery. There ain't a speck o' pure scenery in this town as she stands now, an' won't be till towards nine o'clock, when I calculate I an' my friend here will be ready to go out an' make some. Good-lookin' scenery, Claude, has to be manufactured just so, as you'll see if you hang around. When it's all done, if you're not dead or dyin', you'll have an education.'

"Well, what I said turned out correct: towards nine o'clock we weren't anythin' if not ready. Harah an' Licks, off the ship, had found us in the billiard-parlor, an' we'd taken on a nice little fella named Ballory, off a British destroyer lyin' in the harbor. That is, he was a nice little fellow till he lost his mind, which he did later in the evenin', as I'll explain.

"By nine o'clock that billiard-parlor was a show. Harah an' Patrick an' the Britisher were doin' a three-cornered bayonet duel with cues all over the place, an' Licks an' I were flouncin' up an' down the spectators' platform, singin':

THE MYSTERIOUS HOURS

*“We are the Broad-way Girls!
With the naughty! sporty! curls!
Hie! Tie! Diddle-dee die—”*

hunchin' up our shoulders an' shakin' our fingers in front of our faces an' pretendin' to flip up our skirts in back. They came downstairs in force an' fired the bunch of us out on the street, makin' no distinction at all in favor o' the guy from Kalamazoo, who'd had eight lemonades o' *my* countin', wherever he'd put 'em!

“While we were standin' in the street, between half a dozen plans, that little Ballory says, all at once:

“‘Mates,’ he says, gigglin’, ‘while only five steps off, let me show you the fort this town’s got. It’s a lovely affair; when I go aboard I’m goin’ to swipe a service revolver off the armorer an’ sneak back in a small boat an’ just lit’rally blow it out o’ the ground with five shots. This way,’ says he, slidin’ down a flight o’ stone steps on the back of his neck. ‘The crafty devils!’ he says, gettin’ up. ‘They’ve changed this place around since I came up, or *that* wouldn’t ‘a’ happened. But there she lies, anyhow. That’s a fort you’re lookin’ at. Ain’t it a sweet one?’

“All I saw was a masonry wall with a row

SHORTY AND PATRICK

o' cannons on it pointin' out to sea. But on the wall, with his back to us, leanin' over a cannon an' lookin' off in the twilight, I saw a little card in a Prince Albert frock coat an' a high gaff topsail; you know,—a silk hat. I may as well tell you now, who should he turn out to be, but the French Ambassadd."

"Ambassadd?" I repeated. "You mean Ambassador?"

"He was the French Ambassadd," replied Shorty, calmly.

"But, Shorty, there's no French Ambassador at Tangier—"

"He was the French Ambassadd," Shorty retorted.

"I beg your pardon, then."

"Granted. He was the French Ambassadd. We all saw him; an' somehow he looked so dinky, leanin' over the cannon in those clothes, he tickled us. All except that little Ballory.

"'Why, there he is,' hisses Ballory, frownin' towards the high gaff topsail most ferocious. 'There's the bloomin', funny-minded bridegroom moved the steps on me. I can see his shoulders shakin' from here; darned if he ain't laughin' at me behind his back!'

"'Have sense!' says Patrick to him like a

THE MYSTERIOUS HOURS

father. 'That fella's all right; he hasn't done anythin' to you. He don't even know we're here. He's mediatin'.'

" 'I don't like him,' says little Ballory, glarin' at the guy. 'One thing, his hat don't fit him. It's too big for him. I bet he stole it. He's a thief, that's what he is. Why, I'll prove it to you.'

"Before any one thought to stop him, he goes sneakin' up behind the guy, on tiptoes, with his knees out. An' all at once, reachin' out an' takin' tight hold of the guy's hat brim, he gives a terrible jerk down on it.

" 'What'd I say!' yells Ballory, jumpin' back with a triumphant gesture. Would you believe it, the guy's head had disappeared clean into his hat!

"Well, Patrick an' I fell into each other's arms an' howled. We shouldn't 'a' done that, though; for while we were so, clingin' to each other, too weak to waggle a finger, Licks an' Harah an' that little Ballory an' the Kalamazoo tourist were makin' the quickest get-away of their lives, up the stone steps an' into parts unknown. When we came to our senses, we were all alone with the Prince Albert guy, an' he was waltzin' about like a top, cussin' into his hat an'

SHORTY AND PATRICK

tryin' to get it off. All at once, off it came in two pieces, an' he saw us—Patrick an' I—leanin' up against each other. The next I knew, he was chasin' us through a strange street, roarin' like a hungry tiger.

“‘Patrick,’ I says to him, between jumps, ‘I’ve already had *my* activity to-day, aboard ship.’

“‘Keep goin’,’ says Patrick. ‘I’m suspicious that he’s important in these parts, with those clothes an’ all. He’ll make us trouble if he gets a good look at us. We must escape him. Hit it up.’

“We did so, but we couldn’t lose him any more than if we were towin’ him. We went boundin’, full speed, through alleys, bowlin’ over stray natives an’ hurdlin’ donkeys, till little Shorty, for one, was to his last gasp. Just then we saw, ahead, a little sign stickin’ out from a house-front, an’ on the sign, in English: ‘Curiosities.’

“We took the entry at one leap an’ slammed an’ locked the door, just as the Prince Albert guy fired himself against it. There wasn’t but one other soul in the place: a little, fat, civilized man, who came rushin’ for’d.

“‘Now, then,’ he cries out, ‘what’s all this?’

“‘Friend,’ I wheezes, solemnly puttin’ one

THE MYSTERIOUS HOURS

hand on my heart an' takin' a chance. 'In the name o' Mister Roosevelt—'

"He peeks out of a little window.

" 'Why, you maniacs!' he says, grinnin' an' hangin' somethin' over the pane. 'If it ain't the French Ambassadd!'

" 'You come with me,' he says, an' leads us back to a dingy bedroom, like, stuffed full o' the overflow from the shop, with a door at the rear.

" 'There's an alley outside,' he says. 'Watch your chance an' vanish, whilst I parley with the Ambassadd through the front. But first,' he says, findin' three glasses an' a bottle, 'here's a little bit to the American navy in distress, which ain't often.'

" 'An' here's another little bit,' says Patrick, as if he owned the bottle himself, 'to our gallant rescuer.'

" 'An' here,' says I, not to be outdone in hospitality by any one, 'is another yet, to hot-footed, hell-roarin' M'soo Gaston Crosspatch, the hat-thief—need I say, gents, to whom I refer?'

"The proprietor says good-by with feelin', an' goes through the shop to hold parley, walkin' on air. We opened the back an' rubbered out.

SHORTY AND PATRICK

Well, you could 'a' knocked us over when we found the escape from the alley was by the front o' the house, where the French Ambassadd was carryin' on!

" 'Why,' says Patrick, comin' in an' closin' the door, 'we're bottled up! We'll never get past him without his seein' us!'

" 'Keep your shirt on,' I says, lookin' round. Then, whether it was the three toasts gettin' to work, or what, a great big, life-size, dazzlin' roos de guerre hits me between the eyes.

" 'Patrick,' I cries, 'we'll go disguised!'

" 'Disguised!' sneers Patrick, with a scornful laugh.

" 'That's what! Why, look here; don't tell me you haven't noticed all the fat, haughty, stingy-minded ladies in this town, trottin' round wrapped up in sheets an' holdin' the tails of their skirts across their noses? Look here!'

"I make a swipe at the bed an' drag off a blanket an' two pillows. One pillow I stick in the front o' my waist-band, the other down the back. I climb inside the blanket, wrap it round me an' over my head, an', catchin' up the end of it in one hand, I hold it over my face so that all you could see o' me was my two eyes.

THE MYSTERIOUS HOURS

“ ‘Now, then,’ I says, ‘I suppose that’s poor? Who am I, stranger, kindly tell?’

“Patrick walked round, lookin’ at me from all sides. Then he begun to grin.

“ ‘Well, if you ain’t, weight an’ all!’ he says. ‘All except the shoes, Shorty.’

“I kicked off my shoes, rolled up my pants to the knees, an’ pulled a pair o’ flat, yellow slippers out o’ the stock piled up in the corner.

“ ‘Why,’ I says, ‘here’s everythin’ at hand, as if made for us! An’ look at this box o’ brass bracelets!’

“I get into the slippers, snap the bracelets on my ankles, an’ sail across the room, with the end o’ the blanket over my face, clankin’ an’ switchin’ my pillows till Patrick had to sit down on the bed with tears runnin off his nose.

“ ‘Save us,’ he gasps. ‘It’s perfect!’

“ ‘Well, then,’ I says, ‘get busy, will you? There’s another blanket yet, an’ if you run short o’ pillows, pad with somethin’ else; for you’re no kind of a lady in these parts, I take it, unless you’re in the baby elephant class.’

“Say, I wish some one with a sense o’ youmor could ‘a’ seen us when we came out. There wasn’t a choice between us for looks, both bein’ equally plump, and covered up, an’ decorated

SHORTY AND PATRICK

with noisy Morocco jewelry. We wafts up the alley, showin' nothin' but eyes an' ankles, which, you'll know, is considered the best o' good manners thereabouts. An' sailin' grandly round the corner, like a pair o' balloons, we ran across the French Ambassadd, ravin' through the key-hole, an' a bunch o' natives, standin' behind him, tappin' their foreheads.

"We brushed through the crowd in the most ladylike way you can think of, an' floated up the street. Around a dark corner we stopped an' shook hands.

"Says Patrick, right away:

" 'We'd best keep movin', Shorty; our liberty must be nearly up, an' all these costumes must be returned in good order—'

" 'Goin'!' I cried out, indignantly. 'When it's just gettin' good?'

"I had a look round the corner. The Ambassadd was nowhere; the crowd was leavin'. I saw that the curiosity man had let him in, so as he could satisfy himself we weren't there.

" 'Then he'll be out in a minute, Patrick,' I said. 'An' we'll just march by once again for good luck.'

"Sure enough. I'd scarcely said it when forth he comes an' sets out, stampin', towards us.

THE MYSTERIOUS HOURS

With that, blowin' out of our alley, we bear down on him. But the street was narrow for three, an' just as we passed him, with our noses in the air an' all covered up, Patrick got the Ambassadd's shoulder in the chest. Immediately, bein' Irish, he mislaid his temper.

"'Where you goin'!' he snaps through the end of his blanket, as if he was about to take Gaston at one bite. 'Bumpin' that way into a decent married woman! Loafer!'

"I dragged Patrick away, leavin' the French Ambassadd with his chin hangin' down.

"'Nice native lady you are!' I says, jerkin' him along at a trot. 'Blackguardin' a stranger in a bass voice, with a brogue! Beat it! He's after us again! Now, you see, for that we've got it all to do over.'

"That's right, he was hot after us, an' no mistake. I think once or twice we might 'a' lost him in the dark, but with our bangles we made a racket like a couple of sleighs. Still, he was always just a cable-len'th behind; an', d'you know, I could 'a' begun to enjoy it till he started yellin'.

"'Patrick,' I says, 'I suspect that's French or Tangier for "Stop thief."' What's more, I'm a

SHORTY AND PATRICK

slipper shy. It's got to end. Former tactics, now: dive in wherever you see an openin', an' trust to luck.'

"Next minute we turned a corner an' saw an openin'. It was the door of a café, like as not where our Kalamazoo friend was urg'in' us to go an' see the natives drinkin' tea. In we dived, knockin' over a coon with a trayful o' coffee cups, through a little hall with a flight o' steps at the back. We took those steps three together. On the second floor was another flight. We took them four together, an' popped out through an open trap-door onto the roof. We shut the hatch an' sat on it to breathe.

" 'Have we lost him?' says Patrick, layin' his ear to the trap-door.

" 'Him!' I says. 'Don't you know him yet? No, Patrick, we've not even begun to lose him. You'll hear him in just a minute poundin' on the underneath o' where you're sittin'.'

"Sure enough, some one began to beat on the bottom o' the trap-door. So, leavin' Patrick to hold it tight, I skips off to the next roof. Three roofs down I found a loose hatch. Racin' back to Patrick, I told him.

" 'He's stopped to get his wind,' says Patrick, swallowin' hard; 'but he's had me rockin' on

THE MYSTERIOUS HOURS

this thing like a dingey in a typhoon. He's makin' me seasick, the little shrimp!

"'Come on, then,' says I. 'An' keep your sleigh-bells quiet.'

"We dodged across the roofs to the open trap an' into it. You can search me how we ever had the nerve to do that—down a dark hole, into a strange place, on the chance! We were no better than housebreakers—an' in such a town! There might 'a' been guys with swords an' long Oriental blunderbusses waitin' for us below, just dyin' for the pleasure. Would you believe it, we never thought o' that.

"We got down the ladder into a room with a tiny red lamp hangin' from the ceilin'. The ceilin' was all pinched up into patterns—knobs stickin' out all over; somethin' new to me. But the room itself! There were so many lookin'-glasses, an' shiny stools, an' plants in jugs, an' rugs, an' sofa pillows, you hardly dared to move, for fear o' knockin' somethin' over. It looked so swell, Patrick got scared.

"'Get a move on!' he says, in a rattlin' whisper. 'This is no place for us.'

"As for me, all at once the hot room begun to go to my head.

"'Forget it!' I says, commencin' to enjoy my-

SHORTY AND PATRICK

self. 'Why, this is rich! This takes me back to that Turkish joint in Fourteenth Street—only better. Mind if I take off my blanket; it's a little stuffy, as you say. Ain't you drowsy in this place? I could use some o' those fat sofa pillows to advantage. What! Do my eyes deceive me, or can that be a lunch!'

"On a little stool I saw a tray, an' on the tray was laid out a lot o' grub. I just couldn't contain myself; I dived in after it with both hands.

" 'Holy!' cries Patrick frantic'ly, grabbin' me back. 'What shall I do with you? That stuff's hot; it's just been laid there for some one.'

" 'You're crazy,' I says, with my mouth full. 'They were expectin' us. Don't be a dope; catch hold o' some. Don't you like onions? Here's Irish stew, it tastes like; you'll fall for that, I hope. Find me the salt, then, if you won't eat anythin'.'

" 'We're dead men,' groans Patrick, an', gettin' a half-Nelson on me, he drags me back for the ladder. I've a suspicion, what with the two of us rockin' about, we must 'a' started quite a little noise. At any rate, suddenly somethin' made us both stop an' turn around. An' there, crowded into a doorway an' gapin' at us horror-struck, were four tremendous dames.



“Gapin’ at us horror-struck were four tremendous dames.”

THE MYSTERIOUS HOURS

"Those four tremendous dames took one look an' screeched. Gee, how they could screech! An' with that, away they went, head over heels, screechin' continu'lly.

"Well, things moved quick. The whole house below wakes up with a roar. Patrick jumps for the ladder; but me for some curtains on the wall, for I had a hunch. Sure thing: there was a window behind 'em, barred over with wooden stuff, which I jerked into the room.

" 'This way's safe out, Patrick,' I yells to him, an' he comes on the run from the ladder.

" 'He's in sight,' says he, with a wild laugh.

" 'Who?' I asked, makin' the blankets fast together an' throwin' one end out o' the window.

" 'The Ambassadd,' says Patrick. 'He saw me stick my head out, an' rushed for me across the roofs. Hist! Out with you, for they're comin' upstairs.'

" 'Up them an' down them both, then,' says I, for I could see the Ambassadd's legs gettin' through the trap-door. There was a turrible trample outside, an' I chucked myself through the window. I went down the blankets with Patrick on my shoulders. When we touched the street we ran, an' ran, an' ran.

SHORTY AND PATRICK

"Finally, when we were miles away, a thought took me. I stopped runnin'.

" 'Patrick,' I says, 'you were last out; tell me true, what was your partin' glimpse?'

" 'Shorty,' sobs Patrick, collapsin' on me, 'my partin' glimpse was the French Ambassadd . . . havin' just reached the foot o' the ladder . . . an' somewhere in the neighborhood of a dozen coons . . . about eight foot high . . . rushin' at him with their mouths open . . . Shorty . . . I think we've shook him.' "

After a while, breaking an appreciative silence, I ventured an inquiry about the youth from Kalamazoo.

"Why," Shorty told me, "I asked Harah that very same, next mornin'. Harah says:

" '*We* saw him last up on a water-trough in some camel stable, I should take it to be, doin' that tremble-jelly dance for a mob o' villagers. What! mean to say you didn't hear a crash shortly after we parted at that fort? That was him, fallin' off the water-wagon. He'll have far more scenery to write home than'll go on a picture post-card *this* mornin'—if he don't commit suicide on wakin' up, that is.'

"There was always fun in Harah. I'd like to see him. . . . 'Twas him—remember, Patrick?

THE MYSTERIOUS HOURS

—first read the flags that Fourth, off Santiago?”

“Read what?” I asked. And even Shorty, in answering, was sober, as one who repeats a phrase of history:

“‘The Enemy is Comin’ Out!’

“Mind how the ship lifted to that, Patrick? The racin’ all ways, the bugle goin’, the engines thumpin’ harder an’ harder underneath? Every one slappin’ backs an’ gallopin’ to battle stations an’ callin’: ‘There they are. See ’em? There they are!’ ”

“The aft turret,” murmured Patrick, “wid every man’s heart poundin’ in his mouth for fear we’d miss our first shot at ’em. Do I remember? Z-z-zing! goes our ear-drums, an’ it was War at last!”

“I betcha!” cried Shorty with glowing eyes, again in the turret crowded with naked men and shining steel, ringing from the terrific discharge, trembling from the rush of the great ship.

The gleam faded from his eyes; he sat looking before him dully.

Then, on the silence, as if waiting for this moment, stole through the open windows the clear striking of ships’ bells, first near, then farther,

SHORTY AND PATRICK

then far, mingling in lucid harmony, exquisite in the night stillness.

"Seven bells," whispered Shorty, and stared toward the window.

We followed him across the room. With him we looked down on the river: on the lights of moving shipping weaving with shore lights vague, slowly changing patterns; on those other lights beyond them to the north, assembled, stationary, marking with pin-point groups five large, familiar outlines.

"Well, I'm—"

"I thought you knew," I said.

"I didn't think, when I came in, what with the fog in the end o' the street."

"Do you place her?"

"Second from here. Look, lights still on in the wardroom country—special doin's to-night. There's somethin' movin' aft there—oh, the anchor watch? There's a light at the starb'd gangway. A boat, hey? Visitors? Sst! The Ardoises are goin'!"

High above that second great bulk broke out suddenly a vertical string of lights, red and white, winking, rippling into brilliancy, vanishing, reappearing in swift variation.

"Still! 2222, 2222; Z—that's the *Alaska's* call-

THE MYSTERIOUS HOURS

letter. ‘*Alaska*—visitors’—launch—mistaken—ship—possibly—off—your—gangway—kindly—ascertain—’ It’s Ol’ Particular himself talk-in’. Ascertain’s his word, not to mention Perspicacity. Good Ol’ Man. . . .”

Staring down, his unguarded face turned wistful. We read his thoughts perfectly and, keeping silence, let him have them all: of past romance infinitely varied, of days and nights in settings homely and exotic, peaceful and tremendous.

“She looks good, don’t she?” Shorty asked, uncertainly.

“Ah, but Shorty,” answered a soft Irish voice, “I’m gettin’ lonesome out there.”

If this was talk for both to blush at, and violently deny, in daylight and another place, neither seemed to realize that now. They stood looking down together at the lights. And presently Shorty murmured:

“You ol’ speckled seducer. You ol’ flannel-mouthed recruiter. . . .”

His hand stole up and gently ruffled Patrick’s hair.

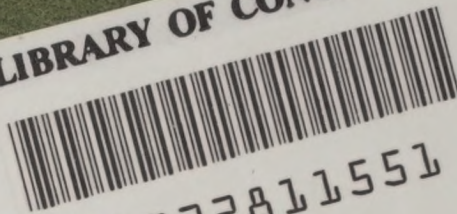
DEC 22 1910

One copy del. to Cat. Div.

DEC 22 1910

Shorty & Patrick

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00022811551